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# BIFF McCARTY

## THE EAGLE SCOUT

BY

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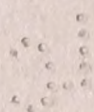
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THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO MY BOY SCOUTS, WHO HAVE FURNISHED THE INSPIRATION FOR THIS STORY, IN RECOGNITION OF THE MANY HAPPY HOURS WE HAVE SPENT TOGETHER.







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## CHAPTER I

### BIFF McCARTY APPEARS

“HALT!”

The sharp command of Officer Hagerty rang out on the still night air. A boy darted into the shelter of a nearby alley pursued by the policeman. Again the command, “Halt!” was given to the sprinting figure, and when it was again disregarded by the fugitive, who was attempting escape by scaling a high fence, the officer drew his revolver and fired point-blank at the boy. The bullet went through his trouser leg and buried itself in the fence. The boy, quivering with excitement, released his hold and fell to the ground, and was immediately clutched in the strong grasp of the officer, who had just arrived, panting from the chase.

“So, ye tried to make yer get-a-way, did ye?—ye young crook!” shouted the officer, pulling the boy to his feet.



"I ain't done nothin'," protested the boy.

"Yes, ye have," answered Hagerty. "Ye held up Skippy Reagan and robbed him. Come along to the station."

"Yes," admitted the boy as he was led away. "I took my own money from him."

"Tell it to the judge," laughed the officer, derisively.

Arriving at the police station, the boy was locked in a cell for the night, and the next morning was taken to court for trial.

Lawyer Hudson stopped a moment in the courthouse corridor to speak to a friend, when the latter remarked: "There is an interesting case on trial in the Juvenile Court. A boy is charged with highway robbery, and while the evidence against him appears strong, I believe there is something back of it all which has not been brought out."

"I'll take a look in," replied Mr. Hudson.

Entering the courtroom, he found a fourteen-year-old boy, William, alias "Biff," McCarty, on trial charged with robbery and assault. The evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution showed that the boy,



at the head of his gang, had waylaid James Reagan—a man of twenty-three years—in an alley a few nights previous and after beating him over the head with a club had robbed him of eight dollars. The boy was awed and frightened by the strange proceedings and the solemnity of the court. He sat looking stolidly ahead of him, apparently little interested in the trial. He appeared to have all the indifference of a young and hardened criminal. Mr. Hudson walked inside the bar, and taking a seat beside McCarty laid his hand on the arm of the boy and whispered, “What’s the trouble, my lad?”

The boy replied, indifferently, “O, nothin’.”

“Did you rob this man?” asked Mr. Hudson.

“Yes, I done it,” admitted McCarty. “I’m guilty all right, but I’d do it ag’in.”

“Why would you do it again?” persisted the lawyer.

McCarty squirmed uneasily in his seat and then looked the attorney squarely in the eye as if searching for some hidden, hostile



motive which could prompt a stranger to interest himself in his affairs. He found in the open, frank countenance of the lawyer a look of sincerity and friendship which allayed his suspicions.

"Come on, my boy," urged Mr. Hudson, "I'm your friend. I will trust you, if you will trust me. Tell me all about it and perhaps I can help you."

"You won't squeal on me, if I tells you?" asked McCarty, earnestly.

"No," said the lawyer, "I won't squeal on you."

"Well then! I'll tell you how it happened," said the boy; and while the police officer was giving his testimony covering the arrest and the confession of guilt made to him by the prisoner, the boy told his side of the story to his new-found friend.

"Ye see, it's like this," began the boy. "My name's Biff McCarty. My father got killed at the quarry when I was eight years old. My mother married ag'in in a few months an' moved to New York an' left me with my uncle, Big Bill Shaughnessy, who's the barkeep in Brady's saloon. I work in



Layman's box factory on J Street, an' I gets four dollars a week. I gets paid eight dollars every other Monday night for two weeks' work. Last Monday after I got my wages I was walkin' home, crossin' the big lot back of the brewery, an' I took the pay envelope outa my pocket an' was countin' my money, when, all of a sudden, a guy slipped up behind me an' snatched my money outa my hands an' made a quick get-a-way to the freight yards. I piped him all right. He was Skippy Reagan, who done time in the works for sneak thievin' six months ago. I chased after him as fast as I could, yellin' 'Stop thief!' at the top of my voice, but I couldn't ketch him, an' he soon made his get-a-way in the dark. The last I seen of him he was crawlin' under a freight car, an' when I got under the car, he was gone. I know him all right. I hunted for him till midnight an' then went home. My uncle—where I live—beat me 'cause I didn't bring him home the money. The next night I gets me gang to help me an' we laid for him till 'leven o'clock 'fore we caught him. Mike Case, one of me gang, seen him first.



He come runnin' to where we was on watch an' said, 'He's goin' up the alley—back of Schultz's grocery.' We runs up J Street to Clifton, then over into the alley where we meets him carryin' a can of beer, an' I says to him, 'Skippy Reagan, give me them eight dollars back.' He says, 'I doan know nothin' about your eight dollars.' Then I biffed him over the head two or three times with a club an' knocked him down. The gang jumped on him an' held him while I went through his clothes. He had eight dollars an' thirty-five cents on him. I took my eight dollars an' put the thirty-five cents back in his clothes, an' we let him up. Then he squealed to the cop an' had me pinched; an' now they're goin' to send me to the works."

He finished his recital with a look of fear overspreading his face at the thought of the imprisonment in store for him. His simple statement of facts, given in the vernacular of the gang, nevertheless bore all the earmarks of truth. He did not shield himself in his recital, but told the facts exactly as they occurred.



Mr. Hudson said, "My boy, I'll do what I can for you."

He then proceeded to cross-examine Officer Hagerty, who admitted that McCarty had not told him the circumstances of the affair, but had merely admitted his guilt when charged with the offense. The lawyer then drew from the witness the statement that "Skippy" Reagan was a police character, that he had served time for theft, and that he seldom, if ever, worked, and then only for a day at a time; that he never knew of Reagan having as much as eight dollars at one time in his life. On further cross-examination he stated that McCarty worked regularly, but was the leader of a tough gang of boys who spent their evenings hanging around the streets and alleys—that he had never known the boy to be guilty of stealing before this offense. He stated that McCarty was a fighter on the least provocation, and that this disposition caused the boys to give him his nickname of "Biff."

McCarty was now placed on the witness stand, and in a simple, straightforward



manner told the story of the theft of his wages by Reagan and its recovery by himself, assisted by his gang. Reagan quailed as Biff pointed his finger at him during his dramatic recital of events and declared, "That's him. He's the feller what stole my eight dollars, an' Mr. Schultz what keeps the grocery on J Street seen him runnin' away."

Grocer Schultz corroborated this statement.

The judge watched the boy closely during his testimony and weighed his statements with care. He was convinced the boy had told the truth. Turning to the sheriff, the judge said, "Mr. Sheriff, place James Reagan under arrest on the charge of robbery."

Turning to Mr. Hudson, he continued, "This boy has done wrong, but he is not a criminal. He has never had his chance in life. He should have it. If I parole this boy in your custody, will you accept the charge and be responsible to the Court for him?"

Leaning over to Biff, Mr. Hudson said



earnestly: "I'll do my part if you'll do yours. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes," answered Biff, stretching out his hand to the lawyer, and the new friends solemnly shook hands to bind the "bargain."

"I accept the responsibility, your honor," announced the lawyer.

Then followed the formal entry on the records of the court committing William, alias "Biff," McCarty to the custody of Walter B. Hudson, Esquire. The next case was being called by the sheriff as Mr. Hudson and Biff found their hats and left the courtroom. They walked silently from the stately courthouse, whose great dome, spacious corridors, and marble pillars seemed to proclaim the majesty of the law.

The lawyer's head was bowed in thought as they went down the street together. He was suddenly asked, "Say, mister, what's your name?"

"O, I beg your pardon," he answered, starting from his reverie. "My name is Hudson—Walter Hudson."

"You're one of these here lawyer fellers, ain't you?" queried the boy.



"Yes," answered Mr. Hudson, "I am a lawyer. Why, it's one o'clock. How quickly the morning has passed! It's time for lunch. Come in here, my boy," said Mr. Hudson as they stopped opposite one of the great restaurants of the city, "and we will have lunch together."

Biff demurred, saying, "I don't want nothin' to eat."

"Come in and have a bite with me to keep me company. I don't want to eat alone," urged Mr. Hudson.

The boy hesitated, influenced by the fear that he would be imposing on his friend, and besides, he thought, a meal must cost an awful lot in such a fine-looking restaurant.

"You're my friend, aren't you?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, 'course I am," Biff hastened to answer.

"Then I want you to treat me like a friend," returned Mr. Hudson, with the light of fellowship shining in his eyes. This imputation of lack of friendship for his benefactor touched Biff's heart and



caused a lump to rise in his throat, as he said, "Mr. Hudson, no guy can't never say I don't stick to a pal."

The ethics of the gang in which McCarty had been reared required fidelity to one's friends as the chief fundamental. They expressed it as "stickin' to your pals," and Biff was loyal to the gang spirit.

They entered the restaurant together and were shown a table located in a quiet corner and covered with snowwhite linen. Crystal glassware sparkled in the light shed from a hundred electric bulbs in the chandeliers overhead, mellowed into softness by shades of delicate pink. The beautiful silver knives, forks, and spoons seemed too good to use in such a prosaic thing as eating. The boy wondered what the huge napkins were for. He sat open-eyed as his benefactor ordered a simple luncheon of substantial food. While the meal was being served Mr. Hudson inquired, "Are you going back to your old job, my boy?"

"No, they've filled my place 'fore this," answered the lad. "You see when I got my job there it was the next day after the boy



who had been runnin' the trimmin' machine had his right thumb cut off. They've filled my place, I s'pose. I guess I've got a look for a new job."

"How would you like to work for me?" inquired Mr. Hudson.

"Doin' what?"

"As office boy—answering telephone calls, filing papers, running errands, and meeting people who call to see me on business, and making yourself generally useful."

"I'd like it," quickly asserted Biff.

"Well, I will engage you to begin at once, at a salary of five dollars a week," said the lawyer. "My present office boy leaves me to-morrow to accept a clerkship which is a promotion for him."

"Maybe I can't hold down the job," said Biff, dubiously.

Mr. Hudson replied, cordially, "I don't think you will have any trouble after I show you what is to be done and how to do it."

The boy looked directly in the eyes of the lawyer and said, "If you gimme a trial, I'll do my best to make good."

Luncheon over, they proceeded to Mr.



Hudson's law office, and Biff was there introduced to Mr. Clarke, the young lawyer assistant; to Miss Dodson, the stenographer; and to Charles Flynn, the retiring office boy.

The latter proceeded in a lordly manner to initiate him into his duties, explaining in detail what was expected of him and magnifying the difficulties of the position. He said, discouragingly: "It takes a lot of brains to do this work. I don't know whether you can hold down the job or not. You've got to attend to business from nine till five."

Biff thought the job easy, when compared with his former one beginning at seven o'clock in the morning, and ending at six in the evening; and the wages—just think—five whole dollars every week! He wondered how Mr. Hudson could afford to pay so much money for so little work. His new fortune seemed too good to be true. He would pinch himself every now and then to prove that he was not dreaming, but really had a "fine job." Biff thought the office surroundings very rich and beautiful.



The highly polished mahogany desks appealed to him as the acme of elegance. A subdued air of quiet and refinement pervaded the office which prompted the boy to resolve that he would wear his "Sunday best" clothes to-morrow and be sure that his hands were clean.

Biff was now fourteen years and six months of age. He was of strong physique, with a muscular development which was envied by boys many years his senior. Of average height, and broad without being stocky, he possessed the strength and agility which gained him the reputation of being a boy athlete. A well-shaped head was connected by a thick neck to ample shoulders. Curly blonde hair, changing at times, when the light played on it, to a suggestion of brick red, crowned his head. His face was full, round, and cherubic in aspect, which belied his real nature. Clear blue eyes looked at you steadily from out their limpid depths.

His hard life had not yet left its traces in his face, which still seemed at times to have a half look of stolidity which was counter-



acted by the gleam of his clear, flashing eyes. His smile was engaging and genuine.

As he left the office that evening for his home he confided to Miss Dodson, "I'm a goin' to hold down this job or bust a suspender."



## CHAPTER II

### BIFF FINDS A JOB AND A HOME

THE next morning Biff appeared at the law office at seven o'clock and hung around the corridors until nine, until the office force appeared, opened the door, and admitted him.

He was dressed in his best suit of clothes, which were clean, though cheap in texture and ill-fitting. His thick shoes, worn at the heels and roughed with wear, were newly polished. He had evidently scrubbed his face, ears, neck, and hands for hours preceding his appearance. They shone and glistened as a result of the soap and polishing he had bestowed upon them.

He took his seat at the desk assigned him in the anteroom with becoming modesty and trepidation and looked about the office, fearful that he would not do what was expected of him or that he would make some mistake.

Presently the telephone bell rang and he



knocked over his chair in his eagerness to respond to the call.

Miss Dodson presently sent him to the office of a client several blocks away to deliver some legal papers. He placed them in his inside breast pocket, buttoned his coat, and with a feeling of pride in his new responsibility hurried away.

Emerging from the door of the office building onto the sidewalk like a human catapult, he collided with a messenger boy with a force which sent the latter sprawling on his back.

"Get out of my way," shouted Biff, looking back over his shoulder at the prostrate boy, as he hurried down the street.

One day, after he had been in his new position a few weeks, Mr. Hudson called him into his private office and asked him about his home and his uncle with whom he was boarding. Biff told him that Big Bill Shaughnessy took all his earnings, and that he compelled him to work late at night scrubbing out his saloon, and doing other rough work which rightfully was a part of Bill's duties.



Big Bill was a huge brute, with tremendous, muscular arms and chest, and renowned for his strength and violent temper. His heavy jaw gave his face a cruel and forbidding look. He had formerly been a pugilist who had won many bloody battles in the prize ring. His love for liquor had induced him to abandon this pursuit and become a bartender, where he could more easily gratify his appetite. He frequently returned home in a state of intoxication and on such occasions Biff wisely hid away until his uncle relaxed into a drunken slumber. Like most bad men, Big Bill had one redeeming trait—a certain kind of rough affection for the boy—which he exhibited during his sober moments.

What Biff called home was not a home—it was simply a place to eat and sleep. His uncle's chief interest in him was his earnings at the box factory, where he had previously worked, and his assistance around the saloon at night. Blows, curses, and abuse had been a frequent experience of the boy, who was kept in a constant state of terror during his relative's periods of



drunkenness. Only the night previous, when he was beating the boy for a trivial offense, Biff had defended himself by striking Big Bill full in the face with an iron poker, cutting a wide gash in his forehead—the promise of a scar which he would carry to the grave. Then Biff escaped and spent the night in a stable, hoping his uncle's anger would cool off.

But Big Bill swore an oath that he would have his revenge on Biff. Heretofore his punishment of the boy had been inspired by his brutal nature. Now, however, he had a personal score to settle with him.

Mr. Hudson decided that the boy should be removed from such surroundings as quickly as possible, and with that end in view, he approached one of his clients, Mr. Berger, a contractor, who occupied a pretty home not far from the city park. This good man and his wife were childless, and they willingly agreed to take the boy into their home to board.

Mr. Hudson called one night to see Big Bill and found him tending bar at a low dive in a disreputable part of the city. Mr.



Hudson approached him by saying that Biff was in his employ, that he was anxious for him to attend night school, and that he had obtained an excellent boarding place for him within a block of the school. A black scowl spread over Big Bill's face as he growled, "You can't take that boy 'way from me. He is payin' me good board money and I need it. You are just tryin' to git his money yourself."

"No," replied Mr. Hudson, "he is not going to board with me."

"Well, I won't stand fer it," shouted Big Bill, "and what I say goes. See? You can't come 'round here buttin' into my business 'cause I won't stand fer it. That boy belongs to me ever since my sister give him to me."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Hudson, "that you do not realize that this change would be for the boy's own good. He has a future in store for him and needs an education to succeed in the world. There is no night school near your home, and there is one near the place where he expects to board."

"That boy don't need no eddication,"



asserted Big Bill; "that's all there is to it. Now git out of here."

Mr. Hudson replied, "I am sorry we cannot agree on what is best for the boy. Good night, sir," and he left the saloon and returned to his home.

The next day he filed a petition in the Juvenile Court, stating that the boy's education was unprovided for; and that Shaughnessy was an unfit person to have the custody of the boy.

The judge, after hearing the evidence, promptly appointed Mr. Hudson his guardian.

That night, while his uncle was still at work, Biff returned to his squalid home, packed his few belongings, and stole away under cover of darkness.

When Big Bill returned home drunk and learned from a neighbor of Biff's escape, he was in a towering rage.

"I'll git him back," he shouted, "and beat him to death. I'll break every bone in that kid's body. He can't make his get-a-way on me. I'll find him an' learn him a lesson he'll never fergit." His face was livid with



anger, as he swung his great, brawny arms in illustration of the vengeance he would wreak on Biff.

Staggering to the table, he drained a black whisky bottle and reeling out the door, shouted, "I'm a goin' to find him an' kill him—kill him—kill him."

As he turned the corner of the street he bumped into Dinky Rivetts, one of Biff's closest friends and assistant leader of the alley gang.

"Hello, kid! where ye goin'?" grunted Big Bill, steadying himself against the wall.

"I'm goin' home."

"Have ye saw Biff lately?" queried the man.

"Yes," answered Dinky, unaware of the motive which prompted this inquiry. "I just left him a half hour ago."

"Where's he livin'?" continued Big Bill in a soft, ingratiating tone.

"He lives with Mr. Berger, at 696 Cottage Street," answered Dinky, wholly unconscious that he was playing into the ruffian's hands.

A wicked gleam of triumph flashed from



Big Bill's eyes. He fumbled in his pockets for a piece of paper, but could find none. His eye fell on a scrap of paper, not much larger than a postage stamp, in the gutter. He picked it up and unsteadily wrote the figures "696" on one side, then turned it over and scrawled the word "Cotige" on the other side.

"So he lives at 696 Cottage, does he? I *love* that boy Biff, I do," he added with a hollow laugh as he staggered down the street.

As Dinky resumed his journey home he soliloquized, "Big Bill acts mighty queer to-night. I can't figger it out. I wonder what he's up to."



## CHAPTER III

### A NEW SCOUT

BIFF was making splendid progress as an office boy. He quickly learned his duties and took delight in his ability to do them well. His sunny disposition made him many friends, and his determination to succeed inspired everyone in the law office to help him. He was glad he had escaped from Big Bill. He hoped he had passed out of his life forever.

Mr. Hudson talked with Biff from time to time about his office work and his study in night school. He inquired of him how he occupied himself on Saturday afternoons—and on Sundays. Biff replied, "I go down on J Street an' see my old friends an' set around an' talk with them."

"Who are they?" inquired Mr. Hudson.

"Well," answered the boy, "there's Mike Case, Slats Kerrigan, Dutch Deichmann, Dinky Rivetts, Swat Fogerty, and the rest of them fellers."



The lawyer's face fell with an expression of discouragement when he realized that Biff was still associating with the gang.

"Biff," said Mr. Hudson, "you are a strong, active boy. I imagine you must be fond of athletics and outdoor life. How would you like to join my troop of Boy Scouts?"

"What's them?" inquired Biff.

"The Boy Scouts is an organization of boys who go out into the country on hikes and learn about the trees, birds, and stars. They learn how to give first aid to the injured, and how to camp, build fires in the open, and cook. They swim, save life, preserve property, tie knots, earn and save money, draw maps, and signal with flags. Wouldn't you like to join us?"

"I dunno," replied the boy, "I don't know any of them kids. I'm 'fraid they're too high-toned for me."

"Not at all," assured Mr. Hudson. "They are all good fellows, and I am sure you will get along well with them."

"If I joined them I wouldn't have no time for my own gang," argued the boy.



"Well, think it over," concluded Mr. Hudson. "We have mighty fine times together."

"Well, mebbe—I dunno," ended the boy, doubtfully.

It occurred to Mr. Hudson that he had not sounded the sentiment of the troop, of which he was Scout Master, as to the admission of the boy. At the next meeting Mr. Hudson stated the matter frankly to the boys, telling them the story of how he had found Biff in the Juvenile Court charged with highway robbery, of the extenuating circumstances surrounding the offense, of the court's paroling the boy in his custody, and he asked the boys if they would elect him to membership.

A hush fell on the troop and the boys exchanged thoughtful glances, but no one broke the silence.

"Come, fellows," urged the Scout Master, "let's hear your opinion."

Bunny Brown arose, saluted, and said, "Mr. Scout Master, if you want him to join, I think it will be all right."

Fuzzy Markham was the next one to give



expression to his views. "I don't think," said he, "that we want to associate with a boy who is a thief. I, for one, am not in favor of bringing criminals into this troop. I won't vote for any boy that I can't associate with, and I won't associate with a tough boy like he is."

As he sat down, a buzz of approval ran through the room.

Scouts nodded their heads in assent to this opinion and many expressions, such as "That's right," "We don't want him," were exchanged between members of the troop.

"I don't think we ought to take him in," quickly said Girlie Carpenter, half arising.

"We don't want a boy like that in our troop," said Boysey LeRoy, solemnly.

"Boys," said the Scout Master, with a serious tone in his voice which compelled attention, "let me give you his viewpoint. He has never had a chance in life; he has been handicapped by his lack of training; he has never had the influence of a good home; he has never had the companionship of good, clean, wholesome boys like you to help him; he has been kicked and buffeted



about; he is not a criminal. You can help him. You can give him a chance to make good in life. The scout law says a scout is helpful, he is friendly, he is kind. I hope you will be helpful and friendly and kind to him. Won't you give him a chance?"

Happy Holmes arose and said: "Mr. Scout Master, I make a motion we take him in. If we don't like him, we can fire him afterward."

The laugh which followed relieved the tenseness of the situation and the motion was duly seconded by Dicky Byrd, after Deacon Parsons had spoken in favor of it.

The Master announced: "We will take a secret ballot, so that every scout can express his real opinion without fear of criticism. The Adjutant will pass slips of paper and pencils."

While this was being done, Fuzzy and Girlie urged those about them: "Vote against him. Vote 'No.' We can't have a fellow like him in the troop. Keep him out."

When the vote was taken it was found that twenty-three scouts voted in favor of



his admission and only two voted against him.

"I thank you, scouts," returned Mr. Hudson, "for your helpfulness. I believe McCarty will make a good scout. At any rate, let us all receive him cordially and friendly. He may be suspicious of your sincerity at first. Make him feel that you are his friends. Give him a fair chance to make good."

The next day Mr. Hudson told Biff that he had been elected a member of the troop and he hoped to see him at the meeting Friday evening.

The boy answered, "I dunno if I want to go."

"You're not afraid, are you?" queried Mr. Hudson.

This imputation on his courage aroused his fighting spirit and he quickly replied: "No, I'm not afraid. I'll go an' see what it's like. If I don't like it, I can quit."

Mr. Hudson answered, "I am glad you will join. I know you will like it. It's great fun—and think of the hikes, the games, and the athletics we have. I have some good



athletes in my troop, and you will have to go some to keep up with them." Biff secretly resolved that he would "show them guys a few things" when it came to athletics.

Next Friday evening Biff, true to his word, appeared at the meeting of the troop in company with the Scout Master. It was a most unusual situation—the troop being determined to "fire" him if they did not like him, and Biff being resolved to "quit" if he did not like them. He was assigned to Bunny Brown's patrol to fill the vacancy in that subdivision. As he took his seat, Bunny whispered, "I'm glad you're in my patrol; we need another good athlete."

Red Parker, second class scout, was assigned to train Biff in the requirements of a tenderfoot. "I'll meet you to-morrow afternoon and show you how to tie the knots," he whispered. "They're pretty hard to tie, but I think you can do it." This challenge to Biff's ability aroused his old fighting spirit and he flung back, "I betcher I can." "Well, come to my house at four to-morrow and we'll start to work," replied Parker, giving him his address.



Biff was an interested spectator of the proceedings of the evening, but concluded that he did not belong in their class, and when the troop was dismissed he walked out silently. Fuzzy Markham eyed him coldly and then quickly turned away his head. Biff instinctively realized his antagonism. At the door Bunny Brown overtook him and throwing his arm over his shoulder said: "Say, Biff, I want you to help our patrol win the honor badge. We nearly skinned the Meadow Larks last time, and I believe we *can* do it next time if you will help." This appeal for action struck a responsive chord in the boy's nature.

"Sure, I'll help," answered Biff with the first touch of friendliness he had yet exhibited. Thus closed his first evening as a scout.

The next morning, when Mr. Hudson reached his office, he handed Biff a written order permitting him to purchase a uniform.

Biff inquired, "How much does it cost?"

"Six dollars," replied Mr. Hudson, "for the complete uniform."

The boy's face fell and he averted his



gaze. Divining the cause, Mr. Hudson said, "If you haven't that much money now, I will lend it to you and you can repay me later on as you earn it."

"Yes, sir," answered Biff, eagerly. "I can pay you a dollar a week."

Mr. Hudson suggested: "I am afraid that would be too much. Suppose you pay twenty-five cents a week."

"Yes, I can do that, easy," replied Biff.

That afternoon Biff went to the store which kept the scout uniforms for sale and selected one which fitted him, and after looking at himself admiringly in the mirror he thought, "I'll make some of them guys set up an' take notice." He paid for the uniform while his civilian suit was being tied up in a box, which he placed under his arm, and then left the store and boarded a street car for his home. He looked the uniform over and over again with admiring eyes, and each inspection disclosed new beauties hitherto unnoticed. He was conscious of the admiring glances of his fellow passengers and secretly rejoiced in their approval. When he reached his room he



again gave himself a critical inspection in the mirror and concluded that there was nothing more to be desired.

“It’s certainly a dandy suit,” he said aloud. “I’ll wear it to scout meetin’s an’ on Sundays.”

Still this answer did not seem conclusive to him. He sat on the edge of his bed in deep thought; and finally, after much effort, this answer arose from the tangled depths of his mind, “I know what I’ll do with this uniform, I’ll make good in it. I’ll show Mr. Hudson I ain’t a quitter. There ain’t no yellow streak in me.” Glancing at the clock on the mantel, he saw it was almost four o’clock, and, recalling his appointment with Red Parker at the latter’s house, he dashed out of his room and sped away in the direction of the home of the scout who was to train him as a tenderfoot.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE BURGLAR

BIG BILL had seen hard days since Biff left him. He had lost his job as bartender in the groggery, after the owner had detected him stealing money from the cash drawer. He had sought a similar job at other saloons, but no one would employ him. His reputation for drunkenness and dishonesty had now become well known. Nothing was open for him but a job as a laborer, for which his enormous strength qualified him, but he steadfastly refused to do such work.

"The world owes me a livin', an' I'm a goin' out an' git it, even if I have to stick up some guy," he frequently philosophized.

He was now out of money and desperate. Something had to be done! No one would give him work—the kind he wanted—and he decided to take by force or stealth what industry would have earned for him. He conceived the plan of robbing Biff's friends



—because anyone who was Biff's friend was his enemy, and it would be a good chance to get even with Biff too.

Big Bill chuckled to himself as he thought how easily he had trapped Dinky into giving him Biff's address. Now that he had it, he would even up some old scores against the boy.

Of all this Biff was ignorant.

"I'll fix him to-night," muttered Bill as he reached the door of the squalid tenement which he called home. Entering, he lighted a candle, when his eyes fell on the bottle in its customary place on the table. "I'll take a swig o' 'skey to brace my nerve," he said half aloud.

Half emptying the bottle, he armed himself with an automatic forty-four revolver and placed in his pocket a black mask, a "jimmy," a candle and matches, and a pair of felt "creepers"—to deaden the sound of his footsteps. Thus equipped, he walked out of the house saying, "Cottage Street, Cottage Street; I've got the number in my pocket."

It was long after midnight when he



reached Cottage Street in the ten-hundred block. The street was deserted—not even a policeman in sight. He stopped under a street lamp, fumbled in his pocket and brought forth the torn piece of paper. He held it up to the light and read the figures “969.” A short walk brought him in front of a house with the number “969” on the door.

“Here it is,” he muttered as he slipped cautiously around to the rear of the house. “I’ll rob the house before I croak Biff, an’ make a good job of it.”

He tried the doors and windows on the lower floor. They were locked securely. He looked about him and saw the dim outlines of a ladder leaning against an adjoining residence—left by house painters whose work was not completed. Carrying the ladder across the yard, he placed it against the rear porch and mounted it. He now put on his creepers and mask. From the vantage ground of the second story he saw that two windows opening on the porch led to a sleeping room and a third window opened into a hall. All were locked. He de-



cided to force the hall window. Placing the point of his "jimmy" under the window sash he began to exert his tremendous strength and the window slowly raised as the screws in the lock were torn from the wood in which they were embedded. In a moment the lock gave way with scarcely a sound and raising the lower sash he stepped softly into the hall and stood listening. Not a sound was heard. All was still as death. Next he lighted his candle, and carrying his gun in his right hand ready for instant use, he began to explore the house. He first descended the stairs and unlocked the front, back, and side doors to facilitate his escape in the event he should be discovered. He entered the dining-room, gathered all the silver from the sideboard, and after stuffing it in a bag placed it on the porch near the side door ready to be taken after he had completed his job. He now ascended the stairs and entered the bedroom on the left, which was occupied by the owner of the residence and his wife, both of whom were sleeping peacefully. He picked up the man's trousers from the chair on which they were



lying and searched the pockets and produced a wallet bulging with currency. From another pocket he took a number of silver coins which were transferred quickly to his own pockets. From the dresser he took a gold watch with a fob attached, bearing the monogram "A. L. S." Opening the drawers, he came upon two diamond rings, a combination pearl and ruby ring, and a sunburst of diamonds worn as a brooch. These were quickly added to his swag. He turned to explore a chiffonier and as he opened the top drawer it creaked, and the owner of the house turned uneasily in his sleep. Bill instantly extinguished his light and pointing his gun at the bed stood tense and expectant, with his finger on the trigger.

He remained in this attitude—it seemed an hour, but in reality it was only a few minutes. At last the sound of slow, regular breathing told him that the man was asleep again and he lowered his gun and quietly went into the hall, deeming it unwise to take further chance of discovery with a creaky piece of furniture. Relighting his candle,



he went down the hall and opened the first door to the left. It was a spare bedroom and empty. At the rear of the hall he found the servant's room. After a glance in it he thought, "There's nothin' in there worth takin'," and silently closed the door. "I've got to find Biff," he whispered. "He must be in one of these rooms."

He now retraced his steps down the hall and opened the first door on the right and stepped into a bedroom in which a fourteen-year-old boy was sleeping. He saw the familiar reddish blond curls covering a well-formed head protruding above the covers.

"Ha! Ha! you young crook," he muttered to himself. "You thought you'd escape me, did ye? Well, here's where ye git what's comin' to ye."

Bill's face was contorted in an agony of rage and hate, and black with the fury of the hellish deed he was about to commit. Standing at the foot of the bed and holding the candle high with his left hand to shed its light on the curly head of the lad, he took aim with his gun, as his finger rested on the trigger. The flickering light of the



candle illuminated the glinting steel as his trigger finger closed in the grip which would send the deadly bullet speeding to its mark.

"I'm a idiot," muttered the man, suddenly lowering his revolver. "If I croak him with the gun, it 'll wake up everybody an' I'll git pinched. I'll strangle him."

He replaced the revolver in his pocket and stepped softly to the head of the bed, the muscles of his great brawny arms twitching with the malevolence of hate. He threw the light on the pillow. The boy turned restlessly in his sleep, which moved the quilt from his face, now upturned to the light.

"My God! it ain't Biff," shouted Bill.

At the sound, the boy sprang up in bed and yelled for help at the top of his voice, while Bill dropped the candle and dashed from the room like a flash. Down the stairs and out the rear door he sped, scaling the back fence, running across lots and through alley after alley until the scene of his crime had been left far behind. He now slowed down to a walk and stopping in a vacant lot, overgrown with tall weeds, he hid his



“jimmy,” mask, and “creepers.” Then he returned to the street and walked slowly toward home.

“That was a close call fer that kid,” he said to himself. “It wasn’t Biff. I musta got in the wrong house.” He pulled the scrap of paper from his pocket and held it under a street lamp. “No. 969 is the right number,” he muttered. “I can’t make it out. I’m stumped. Well, anyway, I made a good haul to-night of coin and jewelry, if I did forget the silver. Biff will git what’s comin’ to him as soon as I find him.”

The newspapers the following day contained an account of the burglary of the residence of Mr. A. L. Stevens, 969 Cottage Street. When Biff read the account aloud to Mr. Berger that night he remarked, casually, “Isn’t it funny, 969 is our number—696—turned upside down. I’m glad he didn’t come here.”

But he little suspected how his own life had hung on such a slender thread as an inverted number.



## CHAPTER V

### A NEW PATROL

BIFF quickly passed from a tenderfoot to a second-class scout, and as he advanced in scoutcraft his associations with the gang became less frequent. He no longer found either pleasure or excitement in the game of craps to which he himself had once been devoted. The gang seemed tougher and coarser than he had ever realized before. But at the same time he recalled their many acts of kindness and their loyalty and fidelity to him. He felt proud that they had made him their leader, not by any vote or formal expression of opinion, but by their actions in looking to him for leadership and advice and their willingness to obey his commands.

He recalled too that the gang was not what it used to be in point of numbers. Swipes Denny and Sammy Weisman were both in the reform school on account of



thefts which they had committed, while Red Kelly was serving time in the house of correction for stabbing a man with a knife. Other changes in the personnel of the old gang had been caused by removals, but the spirit of the gang survived in those who remained.

They still had their hang-out in the alley back of J Street, where they caused the police much trouble. In the absence of Biff, the leadership of the gang devolved on Dinky Rivetts, with Dutch Deichmann as his chief lieutenant. Some of these boys worked in neighboring factories, others sold newspapers, while a few did nothing. They varied in age from twelve to fifteen years, and were known as the "Alley Gang," which had the reputation of being the toughest boy gang that infested the city.

Slats Kerrigan was one of the toughest members of this organization. On one occasion, while quarreling with a member of a rival gang, he said, boastingly: "I'm a tough guy, I am. I lives on Tough Street, an' de farder down de street youse goes de tougher it gits, an' I lives in de last house."



He rejoiced in this reputation and endeavored to sustain it by his conduct.

While loafing in the alley they passed their time in smoking cigarettes, shooting craps, and pitching pennies. They were a quarrelsome lot, but their belligerency was directed against outsiders, and seldom, if ever, toward members of their own gang.

Biff, with his new viewpoint of life, vaguely realized that the future outlook for the gang was dark. Sooner or later they would come into the toils of the police, and when they grew older the prison would open its doors for many of them. He wondered how he might help his old friends.

One day he rapped at the door of the private office of Mr. Hudson and upon being admitted, he said: "Mr. Hudson, I would like to see you a minute, if you are not too busy."

"Certainly, Biff," said Mr. Hudson. "Sit down."

The boy took the proffered seat and immediately began, "Mr. Hudson, you know the old gang down on J Street."

"Yes," assented Mr. Hudson.





BIFF AS A MEMBER OF THE ALLEY GANG







"Well, three of the boys are locked up, an' they won't get out till they are twenty-one years old."

"How many remain?" inquired Mr. Hudson.

"Well, let's see," replied Biff. "There's Mike Case, Swat Fogerty, Dutch Deichmann, Slats Kerrigan, Skippy Connors, Dinky Rivetts, an' Sindbad Saylor. Don't you think you could help them some way?" questioned Biff, eagerly.

"I don't know," mused Mr. Hudson. "Have you ever thought of taking them into the Boy Scouts?" he suggested after a moment's thought.

"O, no!" responded Biff, quickly: "they are too tough for that."

"I don't agree with you," argued Mr. Hudson.

"Besides, you couldn't get 'em to join," objected Biff.

Mr. Hudson replied: "You might have some difficulty, but if you could succeed in arousing their interest in athletics, you might get them in. These boys are still your friends, aren't they, Biff?"



"Yes, sir," assented Biff.

"Then I suggest that you go down to the gang on Saturday night and try to organize them into a new patrol to be trained by you, and we will receive them as the fourth patrol of our troop. I have great confidence in your ability to influence them, and believe you can get their consent. Be sure to tell them about the athletic features of the Scouts. That should make a strong appeal to them."

"Do you think the troop would elect them tough guys?" queried the boy.

"I believe they will," announced Mr. Hudson, as his mind carried him back to the evening when Biff's application for membership was acted on. "If you will organize them into a patrol and train them until they are ready for the tenderfoot examination, I believe the troop will admit them, especially if you will recommend them. The boys have great faith in you and in your judgment."

"I'll try it," responded the boy.

The next Saturday evening Biff appeared in his old haunts and was given a noisy and



cordial welcome by the gang. They were in their usual places in the alley, seated on the fence, on boxes and ash cans, smoking cigarettes and discussing events in which they were interested. The alley was a litter of empty tomato cans, ash heaps, and rubbish, where all the refuse from the abutting homes was dumped. Here, in this uninviting place, surrounded by dirt and debris, was the "hang-out" of the gang where they concocted their plans for petty depredations. The principal topic for discussion just before the arrival of Biff was ways and means for "swipin'" a barrel of apples which stood on the sidewalk in front of Schultz's grocery on the corner.

"You go in an' buy a pack o' coffin tacks," directed Skippy Connors to Mike Case, "an' keep ole Schultz busy talkin' to him, an' we will slip 'roun' the corner an' tie a gunny sack over the top of the barrel to keep the apples from fallin' out, an' then we'll roll it away an' hide it in Swat's coal shed. Dutch will watch out for the cop, an' give three whistles if he sees him comin'."

The execution of these plans was stopped



by the arrival of Biff. After greetings were over, Biff plunged immediately into the subject by announcing: "Say fellers, we are going to organize a patrol of Boy Scouts."

This announcement was greeted with a shout of derisive laughter.

"Don't make me laugh, Biff, me lip's cracked," giped Dinky Rivetts.

"We don't wanta join them sissy boys," scoffed Slaty Kerrigan.

"None of that fur mine," added Skippy Connors.

"What's eatin' you, Biff?" was the derisive interrogatory of Sindbad Saylor.

"Now, listen, fellows," replied Biff. "If you think you are getting in with a sissy bunch when you join the Boy Scouts, you are away off. Scouts are the boys that does things. They have more fun in an hour than you guys have all day. Instead of sitting around this alley shooting craps, they are out in the country on hikes and playing football, and having track meets and swimming and life-saving, and doing a whole lot of things that you guys never knew how to



do. The only thing I am afraid of is, if I take you into the Scouts, you can't make good and I'll be ashamed of you. They can clean you up on football, running, swimming, and boxing, and they would show you up good and proper on a cross-country hike."

This reflection on their physical ability struck home deeply and their pride in their athletic prowess was sorely hurt.

Mike Case inquired, after a moment's reflection, "Are them guys as good as all that?"

"Sure they are," responded Biff, "an' even better. You fellows will have to go some to keep up with the Scouts."

"Well, what do we have to do to join?" inquired Dinky.

"All you have to do," replied Biff, "is to hold up your hand an' say you will make good as a scout."

"Sure we can do that," responded several.

"I'm not so sure of it," continued Biff. "Just because you're cocks of the walk around J Street, you needn't think you will



be big roosters in the Scouts. There's guys in that troop that can beat you in any game you ever played."

"Naw, they couldn't," denied Slat's Kerrigan, with a doubtful tone in his voice.

"What do you say to us givin' them ginks a try?" questioned Dinky Rivetts to the gang.

"I'm wit you," said Dutch Deichmann.

As leader and the chief lieutenant went, so went the gang, and then and there in the alley was organized the new patrol of Troop 20.

"When do we begin?" questioned Skippy Connors.

"Right now," answered their old leader, again in command of the gang.

"Well, start sumpin'," urged Swat Fogerty, while Mike Case insisted, "Get busy, Biff."

"Well, you see, fellers," began Biff, "it's like this: before you can join the troop, I've got to try you out to see if you can make good. If you fail, you can't get in. I told Mr. Hudson—he's the Scout Master, you know—that I believed you could make it, and he says to me, 'Go ahead an' try 'em,



Biff!—just like that; so I says to myself, ‘I’ll come down an’ see if the gang means business.’ If you mean business, fellers, you can make good. Are you with me?”

“Sure, we are,” answered the boys in chorus.

“Well, if you’re with me, you’ve got to do what I tell you,” asserted Biff with all the old-time authority of leadership ringing in his voice. He was once more the fearless gang leader, ready to enforce his commands by the strength of his right arm.

“I can turn a han’spring under water,” quickly asserted Slats, as proof of his qualifications for becoming a scout.

“Button yer lip,” retorted Biff, lapsing into the gang vernacular. “Youse guys can’t do nothin’ exceptin’ with your hands. You’ve got to have brains to be scouts. I’ll try you on your brains. The first thing you got to learn is the scout oath, and you’ve got to learn it so you can say it off by heart.”

There in the alley, in the dim light of a distant street lamp, the eight boys repeated the oath, over and over again, until all could say it correctly.



"That's fine, fellers," commended Biff. "I'll tell Mr. Hudson that this crowd has got the brains."

The praise of their leader reflected itself in the pleased expression on every face.

"Now, the next thing you have got to know is how to tie knots. Who's got a piece of rope?" queried their leader.

"I'll swipe a piece from Schultz's," said Skippy Connors, starting in the direction of the grocery.

"Come back here," yelled Biff. "The first thing you scouts have got to do is to quit swipin' things."

The reprov'd Skippy slowly returned, wondering how the scouts could become a success if they did not take what they wanted.

"I got a long piece on my huckster wagon," said Dinky. "I'll get it," and away he raced up the alley to the lot where he and his older brother kept their wagon used for peddling vegetables. He returned bearing a one-eighth inch rope eighteen or twenty feet long.

"You can have this, Biff; I don't need it."



The rope was cut into seven equal pieces and the scout leader demonstrated how to tie various knots, giving special attention to the duller boys until, at last, all could accurately tie and name eight different knots. The most interesting event of the evening was reserved for the last. It was the drill. Biff announced with great dignity, "Fellows, we go out on parades and marches and you must learn how to march like soldiers. Patrol, fall in!"

The gang looked sheepishly at each other while Mike Case inquired, "What do you want us to fall into—a sewer or a cistern?"

The boy leader then explained the meaning of the command and how to execute it. Afterward followed such commands as: "Right dress. Attention. Salute. Count off by twos. Twos right; forward march." Biff displayed much patience with the awkward squad, drilling them persistently in these simple movements until a semblance of military order appeared. Then, at their head, he marched them around the block, keeping step with a "hep, hep, hep," during which the people of the neighborhood



looked out of their windows in amazement and wondered what new lawlessness the gang was engaged in. Returning to the alley, the boys were lined up in patrol front, five feet apart, and their leader put them through the setting-up exercises which were conducted so quickly and so vigorously that the boys were blowing like porpoises when they had finished. They enjoyed it hugely and managed to extract much fun from these military calisthenics, during which they kept up a rapid interchange of jokes and badinage, with much laughter.

Then Biff announced: "That's all for to-night, fellows. Practice these things we've learned, and I'll be down again next Saturday night and I'll show you some more things."

"Do them guys," interrogated Dinky, referring to the members of Troop 20, "know all them things?"

"Yes," responded Biff, "an' a lot more."

"They're some guys, ain't they?" asserted Swat Fogerty.

"All I ask of you, fellows," said their leader, "is to make good, so's I won't be



ashamed of you. You know I told Mr. Hudson you'd make good, an' I don't want you to make me out a liar. You've done fine to-night and you'll do better every night an' in a few weeks you'll be good enough to join the troop. I want you to do me proud."

"Sure, we will," assented the boys.

"So long, fellows, I'll see you next Saturday night, an' I'll wear my scout uniform," said Biff, who then walked down the alley and over the street where he caught a car for his home on the opposite side of the city.

"Purty good, wasn't it?" remarked Sindbad, lighting a cigarette.

"Not so bad," returned Mike Case.

"Got the makin's?" inquired Slats of Dinky, who ignored the inquiry by announcing, "Say! youse guys has got to get busy an' learn this stuff, 'cause Biff wants us to." A hush fell on the gang at this tone of seriousness in their leader's voice. He continued: "We've got to make good, 'cause Biff told 'em we would, an' we can't make him out a liar. An' you," addressing Skippy



Connors, "have got to learn that drill better or I'll knock your block off. See?"

Skippy protested that he was doing as well as the others, but hastened to say, prompted by fear of the violence of his gang leader, that he "would practice some at home."

"When do we git in a football game with them guys?" inquired Slats Kerrigan.

"Wait till you git into the troop, you mutt," answered Dinky Rivetts.

"Dere goes that guy, Boots O'Brien," said Swat. "I'm a goin' to soak him on the coco with dis rock."

"Can that rough stuff," shouted Dinky. "You're a fine scout, ain't you?—after what Biff told us."

Then the gang dispersed to their several homes, each one's mind filled with the "new stuff" which they had learned that evening and proud of their old leader who was able to teach them things they had never known before.

The gang had been too busy that evening to engage in their customary infractions of law and disturbance of the peace of the



neighborhood. When Officer Hagerty met his sergeant at the corner of the beat at midnight, he remarked: "The Alley Gang has bin a-kapin' turrible quiet to-night. I wonder what diviltry they be hatchin' up now?"

"Keep your eye on 'em, Hagerty," cautioned the sergeant, "and run 'em in, if they don't behave."



## CHAPTER VI

### THE FIRE PATROL IN ACTION

FRIDAY evening again rolled around and with it came the regular meeting of the troop. The particular topic of instruction for the evening was first aid to the injured. The Scout Master had devoted the previous meeting to the subject of anatomy. He described the bones of the body, and had made his instruction effective by displaying a human skeleton until every boy in the troop was familiar with the names of the bones comprising the framework of the human structure and their uses.

He now began to tell them of the muscles which clothe this bony frame and of the organs of the body which perform its work. His talk was interrupted by the loud clang of a fire engine which passed the door going south at a rapid pace.

In a few seconds the hose reel and hook and ladder of the fire department followed.



The scouts were keenly alive to this excitement, although discipline restrained their desire to rush to the door and witness the exciting spectacle.

In a moment several more pieces of fire apparatus thundered by the door, going in the same direction, and it was apparent that a great fire was in progress. Shortly afterward other vehicles of the fire department went tearing by, indicating that a third alarm had been given and that the conflagration was a serious one.

The Scout Master went to the window and, looking out, saw the southern sky reddened by the dull glare of flames, with immense volumes of smoke pouring upward.

The fire seemed to be close at hand—not more than half a mile—and in a section of the city occupied by lumber yards, planing mills, and the small homes of workmen employed in these industries.

Returning to his desk, he said: "Fellows, this is a big fire. I fear many homes will be swept away. We may be able to render some service to the police or fire department by our presence. Suppose we go



over and lend a helping hand, if we are needed."

A loud chorus of "Yes, let's go!" greeted this suggestion and immediately the Scout Master gave the command, "Troop, fall in!" They took their places in line, according to size. "Now count off by twos. Twos left. Forward, march! Column right, march!" And the troop headed down the street in the direction of the fire, which shed an ever-increasing glare of light on the surrounding streets and houses.

Arriving at the scene, they found a fierce conflagration in a five-story planing mill, surrounded by huge stacks of lumber used in the manufacture of mill work.

The entire fire department of the city was on the scene, called out by a third alarm, and thousands of people were rapidly pouring in from every street to witness the awe-inspiring spectacle.

The firemen were hampered by the crowds which densely packed the surrounding streets to obtain a nearer view of the roaring furnace of fire. The few police present were insufficient in number to pre-



vent them from encroaching on the streets occupied by the firemen and their apparatus.

Scout Master Hudson approached the captain in charge of the police detail and said, "Captain, I offer you the services of my Boy Scouts for guard duty."

The captain replied: "I shall be glad to have your help. Deploy your boys along Railroad and K Streets, and I will use my officers elsewhere."

The Scout Master resumed command of the troop which he had left in charge of the Adjutant, and at the word of command, the troop swung into Railroad Street. Then the command, "Company, halt! Twos right into line," swung the whole troop straight into line facing the immense crowd of people which filled the street almost to suffocation.

Then the Scout Master, addressing the crowd said: "Gentlemen, I must ask you to move back out of the danger zone, at least a block. It is necessary, not only for your own safety, but also to give the firemen room in which to work."



Then giving the command, "Company, forward, march!" the troop, filling the street from house to house in one unbroken line, slowly marched forward with military precision, driving the crowd before them, which retreated step by step until they had been driven back to a point of safety.

Leaving one half the troop as guards to prevent the encroachment of the crowd, the other half reformed into line and at double-quick, swung down the street, a block south, into K Street. Here the same action was repeated, and the crowd was slowly driven back and held where they would be removed from the danger of flying embers and falling timbers and permit the firemen to work without hindrance.

Presently a big, burly teamster, six feet tall, broke through the line of scouts and started down the street toward the fire. Little Dicky Byrd, the smallest scout in the troop, running in front of him and blocking his way shouted, "Hey! Mister, you'll have to get out of here. Them's the orders. You'll have to get back of that line."

The teamster looked down on the dimin-



utive boy and gasped: "Well, I'm blowed. Who are *you*, kid?"

"I'm no kid," replied Dicky, "I'm a boy scout and I've got orders to hold the crowd back of that line and you'll have to go back. Gwan now," he concluded with an authoritative wave of his hand.

The authority of the scout uniform had its effect, and the teamster, slowly and reluctantly retreating toward the line, said, "Well, this is the first time I ever took orders from a kid."

The crowd enjoyed the incident hugely, and when the teamster reached the place in the line from which he had started, the crowd broke into a cheer for the plucky little scout. This unexpected action puzzled and somewhat frightened Dicky, who inquired of the Adjutant what it meant.

The Adjutant replied: "It means that the crowd is with you, Dicky, and that you are doin' your duty. Stick to it."

The conflagration was increasing every moment. Dry shavings and wood furnished tinderlike fuel for the flames. The inflammable material burned fiercely, shoot-



ing great forked tongues of flame up into the sky, illuminating the city for blocks around with the brilliancy of daylight.

The heat was terrific. The many streams of water shooting out from the nozzles held by the firemen seemed to have little or no effect on the flames. So intense was the heat that the water was turned into steam, and carried away as vapor, mingled with dense volumes of smoke that seethed, boiled, and rose in a mighty cloud like an eruption of Vesuvius.

The wind had now begun to carry burning brands far to the north and east, at the imminent danger of extending the conflagration. The fierce heat of the fire began to crack panes of glass and blister the paint on residences half a block away. It was apparent that these homes would soon be doomed.

The Scout Master picked a detail of six of the largest boys, and leaving the guard line on Railroad Street under the command of the Quartermaster, he marched his patrol to the threatened homes and began to warn their occupants to leave the buildings, and to



assist them in carrying their household goods to places of safety.

The scout uniform seemed to add the weight of authority to every request made of the people to abandon their homes, and the boy scouts assisted the occupants in carrying their household effects beyond the line of danger.

In one home they picked up a cot upon which an elderly invalid woman was lying, and tenderly and safely carried her a block away, placing her temporarily in a residence where she would receive attention until the danger had passed and she could be restored to her own home.

For more than an hour they did the work of men in saving imperiled property, and at all times they were quieting the fears of alarmed women and children with words of counsel and advice. A great responsibility had been thrust suddenly upon them, but they exemplified the motto of the organization, "Be Prepared!" and they *were* prepared for this emergency.

The fire in the planing mill had now reached its climax. Great yellow, red, and



white tongues of flame shot upward and outward until the mill resembled a glowing furnace of molten metal. Huge streams of fire shot into the heavens, illuminating the clouds with weird and fantastic shapes which were reflected down on the streets again. Lurid lights flashed and then were obliterated by whirling clouds of smoke. Brilliantly colored sheets of flame flung themselves skyward like scarlet banners borne on the breeze. The crash of falling floors, resounding like the booming of distant thunder, sent a shower of sparks and burning brands high into the air, which then fell upon the surrounding houses.

The heat from this inferno was almost unbearable, even at the great distance the firemen were compelled to stand and to endure it, and they continually drenched their faces, helmets, and slickers with water.

A great crack developed in the side wall of the five-story structure. The assistant fire chief noticed it and commanded his men on that side of the building to retreat a hundred feet farther from the building. They



had scarcely obeyed his orders when the south wall buckled and collapsed with a detonation like a gigantic blast. The brick wall fell outward, covering adjacent piles of lumber with red-hot brick and mortar. Again a huge tongue of flame and a shower of sparks and burning brands shot two hundred feet into the air.

The firemen on the three remaining sides of the building were now withdrawn still farther from the dangerous walls, while those on the side which had fallen moved back to their former places, still pouring many streams of water into the seething furnace.

The rear wall of the mill had a dangerous lean toward the inside, and in a few moments it swayed, toppled, and went crashing inward, carrying with it a corner of the north wall.

The residences nearest the planing mill, so lately abandoned and stripped of their furniture, began to blister. Black smoke curling from the eaves of these homes indicated they would soon burst into flames. Almost as quickly as it can be told, a huge sheet



of flame shot up from the roofs of the line of residences nearest the conflagration.

The firemen were now between two fires and their situation was desperate. The chief took in the situation at a glance, and ordered hose companies eighteen, three, five, nine, sixteen, and four to play their streams on the houses which were now a raging mass of flames.

Suddenly a wild-eyed woman, with disheveled hair, broke through the line, screaming, "My child! My child!—she's in there," pointing to the second story of a house wrapped in a mantle of flame and dense with smoke.

Mr. Hudson caught her in his arms. "You can't go. It would be death for you," he said.

"I must! I must!" she moaned, struggling to free herself. "Let me go."

"I'll go," said Biff, making a dash toward the building. He was caught in the vise-like grip of Bunny Brown and Scotty McGregor, as the former pleaded, "Don't do it, Biff. You'll never come out alive."

"No," added Scotty. "It's foolhardy."



With a wrench of his arms and body, Biff released the hold of his captors and before he could be stopped he bounded through the doorway of the house and groped about through the pall of smoke for the stairs. He pulled his handkerchief from his pocket and tied it over his nose and mouth. Then he stumbled against the bottom stair step. Feeling his way with his hands through blinding smoke, he quickly mounted the stairs and opened a door. A sheet of flame flashed in his face and drove him back, singeing his hair and eyebrows. The door of another room, filled with smoke and flame, was open. Crawling on hands and knees, with his face near the floor where the air was less dense with smoke, he searched for the girl, without success. He tried the back room—crawling in on his breast. It was a seething furnace of smoke and flame. The woodwork around the windows was burning fiercely. The floor was smoking hot with tongues of flame shooting up in the far corner. By the light of these flames he could faintly see through the swirling cloud of smoke



the outlines of a figure huddled on the floor under the window. He crawled rapidly toward it, and grasping the girl by the hair, he began to draw her toward the door, exerting all his wonderful strength in the effort, but making slow progress. He now noticed that her clothing was aflame. He beat out the fire with his hands until they were seared and blistered. Black, gaseous smoke filled the room and choked him. Every breath was like a sheet of flame in his lungs. He gasped for breath as the poisonous smoke strangled him. His dry, parched throat had swollen until his tongue protruded from his mouth. His eyeballs seemed about to start from their sockets. He realized that, with his failing strength, he could not drag the girl to safety in the manner he had attempted. A thought flashed through his reeling brain—the fireman's drag—which he had learned in the scouts. Quickly removing the handkerchief from his mouth, he used it to tie both wrists of the girl together. It seemed an eternity! Everything was getting black before his eyes. He placed himself on hands and knees



astride the prostrate figure and thrusting his head through her bound wrists he began to crawl toward the door, dragging the girl with him. A swirl of blackness passed through his brain. Summoning all his reserve power of will and muscle, he slowly dragged himself and his burden out the door, then into the upper hall and down the steps, where he lay for a moment gasping for breath in the somewhat purer air of the lower floor. Then taking up in his arms the unconscious girl, he staggered out the door and fell limply into the waiting arms of his comrades.

A great cheer burst from the throats of the multitude, which rose and swelled until it drowned the roar of the conflagration, as they saw Biff appear with his burden. The cool, pure air of the night soon restored both the girl and the scout. Biff, filling his lungs with pure air, asked, faintly, "How is she?" Being assured that she was safe and not badly injured, he remarked, "I'm glad o' that," and turned over on the sidewalk where he lay and moaned, "My hands are burnin' up."



No one would have recognized the boy. His face was blackened by smoke; eyebrows and eyelashes were burned away, while the hair of his head, which was not protected by his hat, was gone. Both hands were a mass of fiery burns, and his uniform was dotted with blackened patches where the flames had eaten through. He was assisted outside the fire lines to the office of a neighboring physician, where his burns were dressed with cooling lotions and then bandaged. During this treatment he recovered his strength and insisted on returning to his post of duty with his troop. As he made his way back to his comrades, the crowd recognized the plucky lad and renewed their cheers in approval of his heroism.

A flood of water, forced from the nozzles by the powerful pumping of the steam engines, was poured on the burning homes. By concentrating their streams on one house at a time, the flames gradually disappeared, leaving blackened, charred, and dripping ruins as a reminder of the superhuman power of a great conflagration.

Gradually the fire in the mill burned itself



out. Fifty police reserves, called from stations in distant parts of the city, now appeared on the scene. The crowd had begun to turn homeward, now that the fire was under control. The scouts had accomplished their work, and their places were taken by police officers who had just arrived.

Upon the appearance of the police the troop formed into line, and at the command, "Forward, march!" they went swinging up the street in the direction of their club rooms. Upon reaching their quarters the Scout Master said: "My boys, all of you have done a good turn to-night and McCarty has earned a medal for heroism in saving a human life. Troop is dismissed."



## CHAPTER VII

### THE "TIGERS"

BIFF appeared in the alley every Saturday evening, where the gang awaited him eagerly. Under his leadership they made rapid progress in the requirements of a tenderfoot. Biff announced to Mr. Hudson his belief that the patrol would be ready for examination the following week. Mr. Hudson thanked Biff and concluded, "We shall vote on their admission at our next meeting."

When Friday night arrived the Scout Master told the troop the story of the gang, their lack of opportunities, their lawlessness caused by bad environment and lack of training, and expressed the belief that Troop 20 could open the door for their reformation. He concluded by saying that Biff had trained the new patrol until they were prepared for the examination and that he and Biff recommended their admission.

The troop had already learned to love and



admire Biff and they relied greatly on his judgment. Curly Coover arose, saluted, and said, "Mr. Scout Master, I move we admit these seven boys to form the fourth patrol."

The motion was seconded by Toots Weaver and Bunny Brown, when Fuzzy Markham arose and said: "I am not in favor of taking them in. We don't know these boys. They are not in our set, and, besides, the troop is large enough already."

A wave of shame and mortification spread over Biff's face. After the matter had been discussed, a secret ballot was taken. Every member of the troop, except one, voted in favor of their admission.

Mr. Hudson said: "Fellows, I am proud of this vote. It is one of the biggest things you have ever done. Biff, will you instruct them to appear here next Friday evening for examination?"

"Yes, sir," quickly responded Biff; "I'll have them here."

The troop assembled early and a buzz of expectancy was evident. They were curious to know what kind of boys they were going to admit into their fellowship. Their per-



sonal appearance, their dress, and their athletic ability were all subjects of much speculation. Presently the new patrol marched in, with Biff at their head, who introduced each one to the Scout Master. After a cordial greeting from Mr. Hudson the boys took their seats. They squirmed about uneasily while the members of the troop eyed them curiously. Fuzzy Markham pushed his chair back to avoid any possible contact with them.

The Scout Master said, "I think we will begin with the knots first," producing several pieces of rope. The boys began tying knots with great rapidity, passing quickly from one to another until eight different knots had been tied.

"That is very good, fellows," commended Mr. Hudson.

Then followed the history of the American flag and the Scout law, over which they blundered somewhat, but displayed a more accurate knowledge than Mr. Hudson had expected.

"Boys, that is fine," praised the Scout Master. "You have been elected to member-



ship in this troop and have passed your examination, and you are now ready to be sworn in as tenderfeet. Now you will please rise and make the Scout sign."

The seven boys then repeated the Scout oath in unison and resumed their seats. Mr. Hudson said: "Scouts, I am glad to welcome you as members of Troop No. 20. The reputation of this troop is high, and I want you to do your best to keep it so. I know you fellows will make good; I believe in you and have faith in you, and I know you will not disappoint me."

As he concluded Bunny Brown jumped to his feet and shouted, "Three cheers for the new patrol!"—and they were given with a ringing fervor.

The Scout Master then announced, "Biff, you are transferred from the Eagle Patrol to the new patrol. The next order of business will be the election of a Patrol Leader and a Corporal and the selection of a name for the patrol. Nominations are now in order for Patrol Leader."

With one accord the seven boys composing the new patrol shouted, "Biff, Biff,



Biff," while this subject for Scout honors sat silent, with bowed head and eyes fixed on the floor.

"Scout McCarty has been placed in nomination; are there any other nominations?" inquired the Scout Master.

Deadly silence and black scowls from the seven followed this inquiry.

"If there are no other nominations," said Mr. Hudson, "I will appoint Scout Connors to cast the ballot of the patrol for Scout McCarty as Patrol Leader."

The boy, pleased at this distinction, began laboriously to write the ballot. After what seemed to be an interminable time he handed the piece of paper to the Scout Master, on which was written, in a scrawl, the single word "bif."

"By your ballot you have elected Scout McCarty as your leader," announced the Scout Master.

"Three cheers fer Biff," shouted Swat Fogerty, and the entire troop, with one exception, joined in lusty cheers for the boy leader.

Dinky Rivetts was nominated for Cor-



poral and elected unanimously—as he voted for himself.

"The next business will be the selection of a name for your patrol," said Mr. Hudson.

Biff inquired, "Won't you suggest some names for us to choose from?"

The Scout Master responded, "There are many suitable names, such as Fox, Bison, Beaver, Otter, Blue Jay, Hawk, Stag, Bear, Raven, Owl, and Humming Bird." These suggestions were received in silence which was broken by Mr. Hudson's inquiry, "Perhaps you have thought of a name, yourselves?"

Dinky Rivetts arose and said, "Mr. Hudson, we don't want no name like them. We wanta call ourselves the 'Tigers.' "

"A good suggestion," replied Mr. Hudson. "Let each member of the patrol rise and state his preference for a name."

With one accord the patrol arose and yelled, "Tigers."

"As there is no dissent on the subject, you will be called the 'Tiger Patrol,' " concluded Mr. Hudson.



Then the troop resumed their work for the evening—signaling with flags by the Morse Code—on which the Tigers looked with eager interest. When time for dismissal came the Scout Master addressed the newly elected members and inquired about their ability to procure uniforms. The boys shuffled about uneasily until Dinky said, “We ain’t got the money right now, but we kin earn it.”

Quartermaster Coover arose and said, “Mr. Scout Master, we have forty-three dollars and eighty-five cents in the troop treasury. I move that we lend these scouts forty-two dollars to buy seven uniforms and they can pay it back at twenty-five cents a week.”

Seconds to this motion came quickly from all parts of the room, and the motion was carried without a negative vote.

As the troop filed out of the club room Bunny Brown locked his arm in Biff’s and said, “I’m mighty sorry to lose you from my patrol, old man, but I congratulate you on being elected Patrol Leader.”

“Thank you, Bunny,” replied Biff. “It’s



a great honor an' I'm goin' to do my best."

Many other scouts crowded around the newly elected leader and tendered their congratulations. McGregor approached Rivetts and extending his hand, said, cordially, "Dinky, I'm Scotty—shake."

The boys fraternized under the influence of this cordial reception, which was still further increased when Captain Coover, addressing the new members, said, "Fellows, we want you to come out to-morrow afternoon and try for the football team. I know some of you can make the scrubs and perhaps some may make the regulars."

This appeal to their physical natures was instantly accepted. Mike Case responded, "Sure, we'll come," while others replied, "You betcher life we'll be there."

This exhibition of friendliness placed the new scouts at their ease and raised the troop immensely in their estimation. After "Good night" had been said, the boys separated to go to their several homes. Swat Fogerty remarked to his companions, "Them guys ain't stuck up a bit."



"Naw," assented Sindbad. "They're just common guys like us."

"They certainly can play football," asserted Dinky, while Dutch added, "I'd like to make their reg'lar team."

"Does youse think we can ever learn that signalin' business?" inquired Skippy Connors.

"Sure you can," replied Mike Case, "if you use your nut. It's got a kernel in it, even if it does look like solid ivory."

"Aw, you're not such a much," retorted Skippy.

Slats Kerrigan directed the conversation into a new channel by inquiring, "Kin we git our uniforms to-night?"

"Naw," returned Dinky, "we'll git 'em to-morrer after we knock off work at one o'clock, an' that'll give us plenty o' time to git to the ball game at four."

As the boys approached the neighborhood of J Street they separated for their homes with, "So long, fellers. See you to-morrer."



## CHAPTER VIII

### BIG BILL AT WORK AGAIN

BIG BILL had spent the proceeds of his burglary in riotous living and prolonged debauches until the last of his ill-gotten money was gone. In his sober intervals, which were few, he tried to locate Biff. He was searching for Dinky to obtain this information, but Biff had warned Dinky, as well as the other members of the Tiger patrol, to tell him nothing.

"Where's Biff?" inquired Bill, as he encountered Dinky on the street one night.

"I told you once," replied the boy.

"Yes, but I lost the paper."

"What do you want to know for?" questioned Dinky.

"I'm a goin' to crack every bone in his body fer puttin' his brand on me," replied Big Bill, as he pointed to the scar on his forehead—forgetting for the moment that he was talking with Biff's friend.



"Well, I'll never tell you," answered Dinky—and then ducked to escape the swinging blow aimed at his head. In another moment his swift legs had carried him far down the street to safety.

Big Bill shook his fist at the retreating figure and shouted, "I'll git you too." He continued on his way until he came to a dilapidated shack in the outskirts of the city, built of odd pieces of boards, tin, sheet iron, and building paper. The hut was dark and silent. He approached the door and gave three low whistles.

"Who's there?" came from the inside.

"It's me, Big Bill," he answered.

A candle was lighted and the door opened. Big Bill stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

"Gimme a drink, Jack?" he asked, taking a seat on a stool.

Three-Finger Jack shoved a bottle across the table with a hand from which the thumb and forefinger were missing. He was an ex-convict who had lost these two fingers by the premature explosion of nitroglycerin while blowing a safe.



"What's doin', Bill?" he inquired.

"Nothin'. I'm broke, an' down an' out," replied Bill, dejectedly.

"So am I," returned Jack. "But I know where we can make a raise."

"I'm wit' ye," replied Bill. "I've got to git some coin."

"I know a crib we kin crack as easy as cuttin' a piece o' cheese," continued Jack. "It's in the Cypress Lumber Company's office. Not many cops around there; an' they load her up wit' coin fer the pay roll onct a week."

"Let's crack her to-night," responded Bill.

"No," replied his companion, "we got to get a coupla fellers to help—lookouts, ye know, to pipe the cops. I know two pals who'll do the job—One-Eye Ed an' Black Ben, the coon. I'll have 'em here to-morrer at midnight."

After they had discussed their project from many standpoints and planned the details to their satisfaction, Jack concluded by saying, "Be here to-morrer at midnight, Bill."



"All right, pal, I'll be here," answered Bill, as he took his departure.

The following night, as the bell in a distant church steeple announced the hour of twelve, three figures emerged from the darkness at different points and met at the shack. Three low whistles admitted them. Three-Finger Jack, pointing to a sack, said, "I've got everything, boys, a full kit o' tools, a dark lantern, an' the soup," referring to the nitroglycerin. "Have ye got your guns?"

"Sure," they answered in unison.

"Black Ben, you stand watch at the front an' Ed at the back," directed Jack, "an' if a cop shows up, give three sharp whistles so we can make our get-a-way. Bill an' me 'ell crack the crib, an' we'll meet here after the job an' divide the swag, even up."

"Come on, let's git to work," urged Big Bill impatiently and the four crooks stepped out of the hut into the blackness of the night. The heavens were overcast with scurrying clouds which seemed to press close over their heads. Not even the gleam of a star penetrated the enveloping darkness. A Stygian



pall of blackness swallowed them up as they departed, by separate routes, for the scene of their proposed crime. Arriving there, the negro, Black Ben, was stationed near the front door and One-Eye Ed at the rear of the building, where Big Bill began operations by forcing the back window with a "jimmy." Big Bill stepped through the window, followed by Three-Finger Jack, both wearing black masks, when they were suddenly confronted with a drawn revolver in the hands of the night watchman, who had been aroused from his doze in a chair by the sound of the splintering wood of the window frame.

Big Bill jumped forward like a flash, caught the revolver in his left hand and at the same instant swung his right fist with crushing force on the point of the watchman's jaw. He crumpled up and dropped in a heap, while his revolver fell from his inert hand to the floor.

"Don't try any game like that on me," muttered Bill, whereupon the two men gagged him with a towel taken from the wall, tied up his head in his own coat, bound his



wrists and ankles with a piece of rope and threw him in a corner behind the safe.

"Now, to work," said Bill.

Jack produced his tools and began boring holes around the combination of the huge safe which stood at the rear of the office. The chilled plates of steel of which the safe door was made rendered progress slow and difficult, and after some time he was relieved in his task by Bill. The perspiration streamed from his forehead and face as he worked with feverish haste. At last the drilling was completed. Next they filled the holes thus made with nitroglycerin, attached the fuse, and, to deaden the sound, covered the safe with horse blankets taken from a nearby stable. Jack inspected the work with the eye of an expert and announced: "She's all ready, Bill. Let her go." Bill lighted the fuse and the two men retreated to the rear of the office behind the safe. In a moment, a sheet of flame, a muffled roar, and the deadened sound of a heavy falling body told them their work had been successful.

Running to the front of the safe, they



flashed their dark lanterns and saw the huge steel door, ripped from its hinges, lying on the pile of blankets on the floor. Bill switched his bull's eye to the interior of the safe. The expected money was not in sight. The steel cash box inside the safe was untouched by the explosion! With an oath of mingled surprise and disappointment, he said, "Quick, Jack, drill the box 'fore anybody comes."

Jack snatched up a drill and again began to work vigorously. A police officer may have heard the explosion. They must finish the job quickly. Great drops of sweat rolled down Jack's face as he worked the drill into the cold, hard steel. Bill now relieved him and his tremendous strength made the drill bite the steel. At last the job was complete, ready for the explosive.

"I'll put in the soup," said Jack, reaching for the can of nitroglycerin.

Three sharp whistles were heard from the street.

"The cops," exclaimed Jack, as he and Bill rushed toward the rear window through which they jumped, leaving everything



behind them. As they darted among piles of lumber the figure of One-Eye Ed was dimly seen running toward the railroad yards. From the street, in front of the office, they heard the sounds of swiftly running feet. Then three shots rang out on the night air, followed by a fall and a smothered cry of pain. In another moment the sound of footsteps ceased.

"They got Black Ben," panted Three-Finger Jack, running neck-and-neck with his companion.

"They won't git me," wheezed Big Bill, as he increased his stride.

On they ran at utmost speed until they reached the railroad yards, where they slowed down to a walk.

"Scatter," said Jack. "I'll meet ye at my shack."

Big Bill veered off to the left, dodging among and under freight cars and seeking the protecting shadows of unlighted byways until he finally reached Jack's hut, where he found the owner awaiting him.

With an oath, Bill dropped into a seat and panted, "Gimme a drink." When he had



taken a swig from the bottle, Jack followed his example.

"Curses on my luck," shouted Bill, "when we almost had our fingers on the coin."

"Not so loud, ye fool," whispered Jack, raising his hand in a gesture of warning.

Three soft whistles sounded outside. Both men grasped their revolvers. Jack blew out the candle and called, "Who's there?"

"It's Ed," came the answer.

Jack removed the bolt from the door and admitted the man, who began to speak in quick, excited tones.

"I hid in a box car. After a while—I heard cops searchin' the railroad yards. I watched my chance—an' sneaked out. They're headed this way! Let's beat it."

Without a moment's delay, the three men left the shack, keeping in the shadow of alleys until they had gone many blocks. At last Bill whispered, "Here it is," and the figures of the three men disappeared through the window of a woodshed at the rear of a vacant house.



"We got to eat, ain't we?" announced Big Bill.

"That's easy. Wait a minute," remarked One-Eye Ed, as he crawled out the window. In a short time he returned with several loaves of bread and three bottles of milk, left by an early milkman on the back steps of his customers.

"Now," said Jack, "let's eat, an' snooze till mornin', an' then we'll see if our picters is in the paper."

At two o'clock the next afternoon Ed, the least known of the three, was delegated to sally forth and buy a newspaper. He soon returned and handed it to Jack. On the front page was a full account of the burglary. It stated that the lookout, Black Ben, while attempting to escape, had been shot in the leg by Officer Hagerty, and that the negro had been taken to police headquarters and there subjected to the "third degree" for ten hours continuously, when, unable to withstand the ordeal further, he broke down, confessed his part in the burglary and gave the names of "Big Bill" Shaughnessy, "Three-Finger Jack," and "One-Eye



Ed" as his accomplices. The report concluded by saying that these men were well known to the police and that their capture was only a matter of a few hours.

"Whew!" whistled Big Bill. "What ye think o' that?"

"We got to git out o' here," answered Jack, "an' that mighty quick. Here's the plan. Lay low till night, then sneak out o' town to Junction Crossin' an' ketch a freight fer the West."

Under the cover of night three figures left the woodshed, separated, and made their way through alleys and dark, unfrequented streets to the edge of the city. Fearful of every sound, they shielded their faces from the gaze of pedestrians like hunted beasts. Many times they darted into the shelter of a protecting doorway when a figure was seen approaching, while Big Bill crawled through the tall weeds of a lot when he saw the figure of an officer standing at the other corner of the block.

It was midnight when they met near the water tank at Junction Crossing, not far from the city limits. They breathed a sigh



of relief when they realized that the most perilous part of their journey to freedom had been accomplished.

A freight train, coupled to an engine with steam up, stood on a sidetrack, headed west.

"Let's jump it," said Bill, and they sneaked along the waiting train until they came to an empty grain car. Forcing the door they entered the car and closed it without discovery by the train crew.

"Me nerve is all unstrung," said Bill, throwing himself on the floor, where he was soon followed by his companions. The trio relapsed into silence.

Disappointment was pictured on every face as they lay in an attitude of utter dejection. Their narrow escape from capture was an ordeal which shattered their nerves.

"It's just my luck," growled Three-Finger Jack to his companions. "I was born unlucky."

After a wait of an hour the bumping of their car told them that the train had started. Soon afterward, they dropped into a troubled sleep in which they dreamed of police, revolver shots, capture, and prison.



Bill was dreaming of the shrill yells of a mob seeking his blood because of his cruelty to Biff and awoke with a start as the shrieking of the brakes rang in his ears when the train was brought to a sudden stop. He arose and peered out the car door and found that day was just breaking. The train had stopped on a siding to permit the fast mail to pass. The country was thickly wooded—an ideal place to hide. He awakened his companions and said, "Come on, let's beat it."

They dropped from the car door and plunged into the thick brush to the left. For a mile they traveled, when they emerged into an unfrequented country road, which they followed until they saw a barn, and near it a henhouse, and farther on the farmer's residence. Approaching them cautiously, they discovered that the farmer's family was still asleep. They entered the henhouse and each seized two chickens, wrung their necks, and dashed into the woods with their booty before the cackling of the startled roost could awaken their owner. They continued their journey over rough, broken



country until they came to a river—small, clear, and beautiful. Here they changed their course upstream until they came upon a tramp's camp, now deserted, in which they found a tin bucket, old and battered, and three empty tomato cans. Picking them up, they continued upstream until they reached a large creek, over which they passed on a fallen log. Near the stream stood a huge sycamore in the bark of which were carved the words "Fox Creek," evidently cut with a penknife by some farmer lad while hunting along the creek. A short distance farther up they came to a high rock cliff on the water's edge, in which was seen an opening twenty feet above the water and difficult of access. After much effort, the trio climbed the face of the cliff and found the opening was the mouth of a cave which led back an unknown distance in the darkness.

"Here's where we roost," announced Big Bill.

They remained in their hiding place all day, being plentifully supplied with drinking water from the tiny stream which flowed through the cave and emptied into the river



below. At nightfall they descended from their hiding place, built a fire, and boiled two hens which they devoured for supper—their only meal of the day. Then they gathered quantities of dry leaves and carried them in their coats to the cave to serve as a bed. As they lay down to sleep that night Bill said, “We’ll stay here a week or two—till this thing blows over—an’ then we’ll move on to another burg.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” answered One-Eye Ed. “I feel it in my bones that we’re a goin’ to have trouble ’fore we git out of here.”

“So do I,” Three-Finger Jack chimed in.



## CHAPTER IX

### AN ACCIDENT

"Look! Biff, a signal," exclaimed Bing Allen, pointing toward Big Chief Mountain.

Patrol Leader Biff McCarty looked up from his work of cleaning camp, and saw a flutter on the ridge half a mile away. Taking his binoculars, he focused them on the point of the hill and detected a boy scout making an effort to signal him.

Grasping a flag he waved back the signal, "I am ready." Calling Brooks to him he said, "Fatty, here's a pencil. Take down the message as I read it." Then centering his vision on the scout standing on the brow of the distant hill, he called off the letters as they were sent him, by the Morse code, "b-u-d-d-y-f-e-l-l-o-v-e-r-t-h-e-c-l-i-f-f-s-e-n-d-h-e-l-p-a-t-o-n-c-e." Fatty then read the message: "Buddy fell over the cliff. Send help at once."

As soon as the vertical down-and-up sweep of the flag indicated that the message



was ended, Biff called Brooks and Allen, the only scouts then in camp, and, seizing two staves, they started on a sweeping trot for the distant hill, Biff having first assured himself that the first-aid package, which patrol leaders carry, was in his pocket.

Arriving at the top of the hill, they found Chick Mason, who excitedly explained, "Buddy fell off the cliff; he's down there," pointing with his finger far below them.

The boys drew close on hands and knees, and peered over the edge of the precipice. Far down the side of the perpendicular face of rock they saw Buddy lodged on the trunk of a bush which grew out of a crack in the wall. He was suspended in mid air, fully twenty feet from the top and the same distance from the base of the cliff. He lay across the trunk of the bush on his waist, while head and arms hung limply on one side, balancing his legs which dangled on the opposite side.

"Buddy," shouted Biff from above, "O! Buddy."

There was no response from the unconscious boy.



"What shall we do?" questioned Chick, excitedly.

"I wish we had a rope," was Biff's reply. The boys looked at each other blankly.

"I'll run to camp and get one," volunteered Fatty.

"It would be too late. He'll roll off there just as soon as he comes to. We've got to reach him mighty quick," responded Biff. His eyes wandered to the woods back of them, and he suddenly exclaimed: "Stay here a minute, fellows. I'll be right back," and dashed into the woods. He soon returned dragging after him a long grape vine, an inch or more thick at the base and divided at the top into two slender, flexible branches which they quickly stripped of their leaves.

Biff swung the end of the vine over the edge, and looking down, he called back with a tone of satisfaction, "It's long enough."

He slipped out of his coat as he continued, "Here, fellows, you hold the butt end—tug o' war like—and I'll go down after him. When I give the signal, you haul up."

Brooks, Allen, and Mason took their



places seated on the ground in tandem and dug a firm footing with their heels. Biff grasped the vine with both hands, as the boys braced themselves, and sang out, "All ready, boys," and swung out over the edge of the cliff. His heavy weight strained their muscles as their backs stiffened to withstand the shock. He got over safely. The tension on the vine was steadier now. Soon they felt the irregular jerks of the vine as the boy descended it. After a short time the jerking was succeeded by the steady pull of a dead weight, while they continued to grasp the vine with taut fingers.

Biff had now reached the bush across which the boy lay. A glance told him that it would not support the weight of two. He looked about him and discovered a ledge, but it was too narrow and sloping to afford a footing. At his left he found a crack in the wall into which he worked his fingers—then realized that he could not rescue the boy from this position. Again grasping the vine, he descended a few feet, searching the face of the precipice with his toes for a foothold, but without success. He looked



down—and the sheer drop made him dizzy. Working his way to the right, at the end of the swinging pendulum, his toe slipped into a crevice three feet below the bush and in another moment both feet had found a secure hold.

Still grasping the vine rope, he edged himself to the right until he was by Buddy's side. Bracing himself against the bush, he tied the pliant ends of the vine under the boy's arms with the knot in front, which, to make doubly safe, he strengthened with his twisted handkerchief. Holding the trunk of the bush under his right arm, he lifted the unconscious boy with the other and shouted upward: "All right. Haul away!"

The vine began to tighten, and in a moment the limp body was being drawn slowly upward—suspended between earth and sky.

Biff watched the ascent with anxious eyes. "I hope the vine don't break," he heard himself saying half aloud. "It would be all over, if the knot should give way."

Slowly the body ascended, inch by inch,



until at last Buddy's head and shoulders appeared above the edge of the cliff. The keen eyes of Fatty Brooks were the first to notice the break in the vine where it had been tied about the boy! His heart stood still. Another pound would part the vine and send the boy crashing to his death!

"Stop pullin'," he ordered his companions at his back. "Can you two hold it by yourselves?"

"We'll try," answered Allen and Mason, as they braced themselves for the strain.

Fatty released his hold, leaned forward and grasped the boy by the wrist, and, with a pull all together, they dragged him up to safety. He removed the vine and leaning over the edge of the cliff shouted below, "All right up here."

"I'm ready. Lower away," returned Biff.

The boys again lowered the vine, and grasping it in a viselike grip, Fatty shouted, "All ready," and Biff, mounting the vine hand over hand, soon came up over the edge of the precipice and stood on solid ground.

Biff quickly unbuttoned Buddy's coat and loosened his shirt about the throat. Then



opening his first-aid package, he produced a tiny vial filled with liquid ammonia, and inclosed in a cloth receptacle. Squeezing this between his fingers, he crushed the fragile glass, liberating the ammonia, which instantly changed into vapor. He held it under the nose of the unconscious Buddy; the powerful stimulant soon began its work, and in a moment Buddy weakly opened his eyes and a sickly smile played over his face as he said, "I'm all right, fellers; lemme stand up."

He attempted to stand, but was not equal to the task, and Biff directed, "Lie down here a minute, Buddy; we will carry you to camp. You'll be all right—as soon as we get you back."

"Here, Fatty," said Biff, "you and Mason take off your coats. Turn the sleeves wrong side out. Put the tails together and these two staves through the sleeves."

These directions were promptly followed.

"Now button the coats down the front; turn the litter over. See! We have a fine stretcher. Now we'll have Buddy back to camp in no time."



They picked up the pale-faced Buddy and laid him on the stretcher. Biff placed his coat under Buddy's head as a pillow. Mason and Fatty picked up the litter and headed for camp, with Biff walking at the side of the litter and gazing anxiously at Buddy's face which was very white.

It was a long march back to camp and their burden was heavy. Biff and Allen relieved their companions, and finally camp was reached.

Buddy was placed in bed in the Scout Master's tent, to await his return from the hike, where he had gone in command of two patrols.

"How do you feel, Buddy?" inquired Biff.

"I'm better now," he replied, "but I certainly got an awful bump. I was leaning over the edge of the cliff, picking berries. Chick told me to come away or I would get hurt, but I wanted the berries. The edge crumbled away and, before I knew it, I was turning a somersault in the air. Then, something hit me in the chest. The next thing I knew I opened my eyes and saw



Biff bending over me. Did I break my neck?"

"No," answered Biff. "You're all right. You're too tough to kill."

They gave him a cup of strong tea. The stimulant brought color to his face and brilliancy to his eyes.

"Now, Chick," said Biff, addressing Mason, "as a punishment for you permitting Buddy to get hurt, I am going to appoint you his nurse, and you will have to stay with him the rest of the afternoon till the Scout Master returns."

Buddy grinned. Mason answered, "That's less punishment than I expected. Hey, Buddy, what do you want me to do for you?"

"You will have to put on an apron and a lace cap," Fatty Brooks broke in, "and walk around softly and feed him medicine every half hour from a spoon, and take orders from 'Doctor' McCarty."

"Ah! quit your kidding, Fatty," retorted Biff. "I may be a doctor some day, and the first thing I'll do will be to amputate your head, and then you won't talk so much."



Buddy recognized this facetiousness by a grin and the reply: "I don't need a nurse. I'm all right; I want to get out of here."

"Get out of here, nothing," said Biff. "I'm in command of this camp, and you have got to obey orders or take the consequences. You will stay right here until Mr. Hudson returns."

At this point a shout from Fatty Brooks outside announced that he saw the Eagle and Moose patrols returning to camp with the Scout Master bringing up the rear.

"Come on, Fatty and Bing," said Biff, addressing the cook detail, "get busy; we must get supper on the table for this bunch of hungry wolves swooping down on us."

A hunter's stew, consisting of bits of meat mixed with potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, and a sprinkling of onion, which had been simmering over the camp fire for an hour, gave forth a savory smell, which whetted the appetites of the ravenous patrols now coming into camp.

"Gee," said Happy Holmes, "that stuff smells *almost* good enough to eat."



"If you don't like it," retorted Biff, "you don't have to eat it."

"I am hungry enough to eat a board," returned Happy. "It's no compliment to your cooking that I eat it, it's just 'cause I'm as hungry as a hyena. I'd like to get three square meals a day in this camp."

"You do," asserted Biff.

"Yes," retorted Happy, "we get oat meal, corn meal, and plain meal."

The clear sharp tones of the supper bugle started every scout into action. A rush was made for the big spring near by, and arms and faces were plunged into the cooling water and rubbed vigorously with much sputtering, interspersed with shouts and laughter. Stray locks of hair were plastered into place, and the troop sat down to supper, with Buddy occupying the seat of honor at the right of the Scout Master.

Their substantial meal would do credit to any city dining room, and it seemed like ambrosia to these hungry scouts, who ate with the keen appetite of youth, whetted by the physical exercise of a vigorous day. At last, the "cook detail" began to grumble at



the insatiable appetites of their comrades. Biff voiced his apparent disapproval by remarking, "Say! are you fellers hollow all the way down to your feet? Leave enough for the three of us on the cook detail."

"Aw! go cook some more for yourselves," retorted Curly Coover; "that's what you are here for."

Happy Holmes broke up the colloquy with, "Say! fellows, last week I bought ten cents' worth of wire nails. What do you suppose I bought them for?"

"I don't know," answered Curly Coover. "What *did* you buy them for?"

"For ten cents," replied Happy.

A loud chorus of laughter greeted this sally, and Curly retorted, "Happy, we'll duck you in the river for *that* one," while the irrepressible Happy grinned in the consciousness that he was the wit of the troop.

Troop No. 20 was composed of boys from twelve to seventeen years of age, divided into four patrols of eight scouts each, with an Adjutant and a Quartermaster as the first and second boy-officers of the troop. Each patrol was officered by a Patrol



Leader, with a Corporal second in command. The troop was now on its annual two-weeks camp in the great woods, far removed from the city. The site selected for the camp was near the foot of a hill from which flowed a spring of clear, cold water, which sparkled in the sun like drops of crystal as it ran down a meadow until it mingled its waters with Fox Creek, which in turn, emptied into the Meramec River.

Stretching away to the north, east, and west were high rolling hills covered with primeval forest trees, which pointed their lofty heads to the clouds and furnished homes for thousands of wild birds. Here were seen and heard the screech owl, crow, buzzard, hawk, eagle, and many other varieties of the feathered tribe. And O, what fishing there was in the river! Bass, catfish, and sun perch, large enough to give you a thrill when you hooked one and wondered whether you would be lucky or skillful enough to land it. There was larger game too. Coon, possum, bear, deer, wildcats, wolves, and foxes had been caught in the rough, broken country which made up this



wilderness. Here, in this primitive spot, under the shadow of the big hill christened "Old Chief Mountain" by the boys, was located the camp.

It was in such surroundings as these that the troop passed two weeks in work and play, with every waking hour filled to the brim with ceaseless activity until "taps" sounded from the bugle at night. And it was here that Biff was destined to encounter the most thrilling as well as the most unexpected experience of his life.



## CHAPTER X

### THE COMPETITIVE HIKE

DAY dawned bright and clear, and with the first peep of the sun over the eastern hills reveille was sounded, bringing back to camp all the young tourists who had journeyed to slumberland.

The event of the day was a competitive hike between the four patrols in charge of their respective Patrol Leaders. Each patrol was to take a three-mile hike and return, along different routes, and bring back with them, correctly classified and described, the leaves and fruit of as many varieties of forest trees as they found on their way. The patrol which returned the largest number of specimens which were correctly named would be awarded a prize.

The Scout Master announced that he would offer a first-aid kit as a prize to the winning patrol, to be placed in the custody of the Patrol Leader. All were instructed to return to camp before noon.



The Meadow Larks headed off to the northwest along the Big Bottom road which followed Fox Creek up stream. The Moose took the Bluff road bordering the creek running south, which led them down to the river. The Tigers took a trail stretching toward the southwest over a wild, broken country, while the Eagles went due west. All these routes were lined with a great variety of forest trees.

Many of the scouts slung over their shoulders canteens filled with clear, cold water from the big spring at camp, while others begged sandwiches and bread, butter and jam from Cæsar and placed them in their knapsacks to avert the awful pangs of hunger which assailed them at periodic intervals of great frequency.

Leaving camp in columns of two, the Moose headed south along a private road, thence down under the railroad bridge spanning Fox Creek, around Big Chief Mountain and thence into the main Bluff road stretching away in the direction of the river. The boys drank in great draughts of the cool fragrant morning air as they



marched along. The primitive surroundings were in harmony with their primitive natures, which they voiced in loud yells of delight. The sheer joy of living manifested itself in shouts, whoops, and the bantering of comrades.

They encountered many varieties of trees, among them some straggling groups of an evergreen character, and here a discussion arose. Fatty Brooks declared they were pine trees; Slim Anderson volunteered the opinion that they were fir trees; Heine Meyers expressed his belief that they should be called evergreen, while Happy Holmes said he thought they were "Christmas trees."

The road at this point forded Fox Creek, and it was necessary for the boys to strip off their shoes and stockings to wade across the stream. Fatty Brooks, who had bared his legs, said to Dicky Byrd, just commencing to unlace his shoes, "Hey! Dicky, if you will carry my shoes and stockings, I will carry you across on my back, and you won't have to undress."

"You're on," Dicky promptly accepted, and climbed on the back of the big husky



lad, who laughingly flung back at him, "I'm not on, it is you who are on," and plunged into the stream knee deep. The stones and gravel lining the bottom of the stream hurt his feet and made him step gingerly, feeling his way with care.

"Hey! Fatty," shouted Dicky, "don't you stumble and let me fall."

"You sit steady and quit wiggling about so much," responded Fatty.

With much slipping, sliding and stumbling Fatty reached the center of the stream. Here he lost his balance on a slippery rock and the strong current threw him and Dicky headlong into the stream, from which they both soon emerged spouting water like porpoises.

Other scouts were wading the stream with small companions on their backs, but with better success. At last the entire patrol was across in safety. In a pool of shallow water connecting with the creek, Stuffy Wyman discovered a hard-shell snapping turtle, which he immediately captured and then laid on its back, where it wildly waved its legs in a vain effort to turn over and



snapped viciously at sticks poked near its jaws. "They say," said Dicky, gravely, "that if he snapped your finger in his jaw, he wouldn't turn loose till the sun went down or till it thundered." This piece of zoological misinformation was received with gravity until Scotty said: "Pshaw! fellows, there's nothing in that. He would turn loose if you hit him over the head with a club."

"Just you try it and see," urged Dicky.

After the curiosity of the boys had been gratified by an inspection of the turtle, it was turned over, whereupon it proceeded at top speed to seek the safety of the deep waters of the creek.

Farther on, a giant sycamore spread its branches far and wide, and clinging to its trunk was a vine. It adhered closely to the tree, twining its clinging tendrils in and around the bark and branches of the tree until it was lost to view among the leaves.

"Keep away from that tree," commanded Curly. "That is a poison ivy."

The boys halted, while Curly continued, "If you touch that, your hands and face will swell up and break out."



"We don't want to get poisoned, but we want a specimen of it," argued Scotty McGregor. "This might be the very specimen that would win us the prize."

"You fellows stand back," said Slim Anderson. "Poison ivy don't poison me; I have handled it before. An old hunter once told me that when you touched poison ivy you should immediately rub your hands clean on the grass, and then wash them with water, and you won't get poisoned."

"We don't want to take any chances," cautioned Curly Coover.

"I will tell you how we'll do it," shouted Scotty; "I'll get a green stick, then cut it half-way through the middle, bend it over like a hinge, and shave the inside of it flat with my knife, and that will make a dandy pair of tongs."

Suiting the action to the word, he grasped a leaf with his tongs, severed the stem with his knife, and placed it in an envelope on which were written the words, "Poison Ivy."

Stuffy Wyman was proceeding in advance of the patrol when he encountered a huge



black snake sunning itself in the road almost at his feet. With a cry of alarm he jumped backward and, seizing a stone lying near by, he quickly threw it at the reptile with all his strength. A lucky throw landed squarely on the head of the snake which writhed and coiled about itself in death agony. The patrol hastily formed a circle about the snake, when Slim Anderson delivered a second blow on its head with a stick, and the snake quivered and lay still. Stuffy now took a green limb and split its end with his hunting knife, making a fork, into which he worked the body of the snake and held it up for inspection. It measured five feet eight inches from its head to the tip of its tail.

"It looks terribly poisonous," remarked Piggie Bacon.

"I am sure it would kill you if it bit you," said Boysey LeRoy.

"Let's take a good look at its head," requested Curly. "No," he resumed, "it's not poisonous. You know, poisonous snakes usually have blunt, triangular heads, and his head is a long oval. He'll make good hog feed."



"Will hogs really eat it?" questioned Piggie Bacon.

Happy Holmes snickered, "You ought to know, Piggie."

"That will be about all for you, Happy," warned the Patrol Leader; "another break like that and I'll send you back to camp."

"I didn't mean nothin'," explained Happy.

"No, he didn't," said Piggie, hastening to the defense of his friend.

"Well! forget it," answered Scotty.

Stuffy Wyman relieved the situation by saying, "Let's carry the snake down the road, and if we find any hogs we can try it on them." Suitable to this suggestion, he grasped the stick holding the body of the snake, and bearing it aloft the scouts again resumed their hike.

A downward turn in the road brought them into the little valley through which the clear river, sparkling in the rays of the sun, ran with winding course off in the distance where it was lost among the surrounding hills. On the lower side of the road was a farm, and as they approached the farmhouse Stuffy Wyman shouted: "There's a lot down



there with a drove of hogs in it. Here's where we feed them their dinner," waving the snake carried on the end of the stick. Approaching the lot, he threw the snake among them and the frightened hogs scampered away in every direction.

"I told you," said Boysey LeRoy, "that hogs wouldn't eat snakes."

The inquisitive animals now began to return to investigate the object which had so rudely disturbed their morning sleep and cautiously approached, with many grunts and squeals, until the bravest of the drove grabbed the snake in his teeth and began to eat it greedily. In a moment the entire drove surrounded him, eager for a mouthful of this dainty morsel, until the last vestige of the snake had disappeared down the hungry throats of the animals.

"I told you," said Happy Holmes, as they resumed their onward march, "they would make hogs of themselves."

In a few minutes their objective point, the river, was reached. The boys lay down on their backs on the grassy slope forming the river bank, and looked up at the clear, azure-



tinted sky through the overhanging branches of the many trees clustered along the course of the river.

The insatiable hunger of the boys began to assert itself, and sandwiches were produced from the depths of yawning knapsacks and divided among the patrol, which they ate voraciously, followed by copious draughts of spring water from their canteens.

After resting a while a discussion arose as to the true direction of the stream at this point.

Quartermaster Coover said, "We will soon find out by consulting my compass, but before doing that, let's try to tell the direction by our watches."

The patrol now produced their watches which showed the hour to be 10:15 A. M.

"Now point the hour hand of your watches at the sun, and half way between the hour hand and the XII on the dial of your watch is due south. Knowing south, the opposite direction is north."

They then drew on the ground with a sharp stick the four cardinal points of the compass—north, south, east, and west—and



by dividing the right angles thus produced they obtained northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest.

Comparing this ground compass to the course of the stream at this point, they declared that the stream was running almost due southeast. Curly now produced his compass and placing it on the ground over the compass lines drawn there, found they were correct.

"Now, fellows, it is time to hike back to camp," commanded Scotty McGregor.

The boys fell into line and swung up the road on their return journey, during which a sharp lookout was kept for any new trees which might have been overlooked on the going hike. They soon arrived at camp and found that the Eagle Patrol had thirty-five specimens correctly described.

The Meadow Larks had thirty-two, the Moose thirty-six, and the Tigers thirty-seven specimens.

The Scout Master announced the result of the examination by awarding first prize to the Tigers and handed Biff McCarty the first-aid outfit.



He continued: "The Tiger Patrol has fairly won this prize after a hot contest with the Eagles, the Moose, and the Meadow Larks. I congratulate the winners, as well as the losers, for you have all done excellent work. I hope you will never have occasion to use this kit, but in conformity with the scout motto, 'Be Prepared,' we should always be ready for emergencies whenever they occur. I congratulate you heartily."

Bunny Brown, Patrol Leader of the Eagles, raised his hat high over his head and shouted, "Three cheers for the Tigers!"

"Now, one more for Biff McCarty!" shouted several scouts.

When this had been given, the cook detail for the day rushed to the spring to wash hands and faces, and then worked vigorously assisting Cæsar, the colored cook, in the preparation of the midday meal, while the other boys lay about on the ground in groups, discussing the events of the morning and inspecting the first-aid kit won by the Tigers.

Biff suddenly exclaimed, "I've lost my ax," with a glance at his belt where it usu-



ally hung. "I'll run back and find it," he added as he darted away through the woods from which he had recently come. Picking up the trail by which the Tigers had returned to camp, he continued uphill and down for more than half an hour, scrutinizing every foot of the ground. He had reached the summit of a high ridge covered with trees pointing their heads tall and straight toward the heavens. He was startled by a deep, gruff voice behind him which shouted, "Hold on, there!"

He turned his head and saw Big Bill stepping out from behind a large tree. He looked down the barrel of Big Bill's revolver which was pointed full in his face. The gleam of cold steel made him shiver, and the look of hatred in Bill's eyes, as he sighted the revolver, made Biff quail with fear.

"Throw up yer hands," commanded Big Bill.

The boy's hands instantly shot above his head. As Big Bill approached him, still covering him with the revolver, Biff saw two other rough-looking men closing in on him from right and left.



## CHAPTER XI

### IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

BIG BILL'S clothing was dirty and torn. His face was covered with a shaggy growth of beard which gave him an unfamiliar and forbidding look. A jagged, red scar ran diagonally across his forehead above his left eye. As the three men surrounded the boy, Bill lowered his weapon and sneered, "Ho! Ho! my purty boy, I didn't expect to see you here."

"Neither did I you," returned Biff.

Big Bill stepped closer and with a quick lunge he shot his fist straight at the boy's face. Biff ducked, but not in time to escape entirely the force of the glancing blow which struck him over the temple and sent him sprawling on his back among the bushes.

"Don't kill him," shouted Three-Finger Jack, as he lifted the boy to his feet and added, "Mebbe we can use him. Watcha doin' out here, kid?"



"I'm with my troop about a mile over there, by the big spring," replied the boy, pointing in the direction of camp.

"What's yer captain's name?" he queried.

"Hudson," answered Biff.

"I've got it," exclaimed Three-Finger Jack. "Let's hold him an' make 'em cough up the coin."

"The surest thing ye know," assented Big Bill. "Ye got more brains than any gentulmun I know. Let's tell 'em they got to pay us a thousan' dollars or we'll croak the kid. I'd like to do it anyway, only I need the money," he added.

"They wouldn't have a thousan' with 'em in camp, so we'll strike 'em for a hunnerd. We gotta have coin fer grub. If we swipe any more chickens around here the farmers'll camp on our trail till we get pinched."

"How we goin' to git it?" inquired Bill.

"Easy," replied the other. "We'll write a letter to Hudson telling him we'll croak the kid if he don't leave a hunnerd dollars on the log across the creek near the river to-night. Who's got some paper?"



No one responded. The edge of the notebook which Biff had used on the morning hike protruded from his coat pocket.

"Here's the thing," exclaimed Jack, removing the book and tearing out a blank page.

"You write it," suggested Bill. "I can write figgers, but I can't write writin' well."

Jack thereupon took a pencil and after much effort wrote the following letter.

deer captin hudson

we have got biff macarty and we'll croak him if you dont leeve 1 hunnerd dollers on the log acros the crick neer the rivver tonite. dont try to watch us or we'll croak you, if you dont leeve the munny, we will cut off biffs thum and leeve it on the log to show you we meen bisnes if the munny aint there the 2d nite we will croak biff we are desperit.

yours truly,

three honist men.

"It's done," said Jack, holding up the letter with a look of pride and satisfaction.

"What if Hudson thinks we ain't got Biff an' are puttin' up a job on him?" pondered Bill, as he weighed the impression it would make on Mr. Hudson's mind.

"We can fix that," answered Jack. "Here, Biff, you write on the bottom o' the letter



fer him to do what we want, an' sign your name."

"I won't do it," answered the boy, pluckily.

"O, ye won't, won't ye? Well, ye've got to. Now write what he tells ye," commanded Big Bill as he placed the point of his revolver against Biff's temple.

The boy took the pencil and with trembling fingers wrote at the bottom of the letter:

Mr. Hudson:

Please do what they tell you.

Biff McCarty.

"I'll sneak into camp to-night when they're all asleep and leave the letter," chuckled Big Bill, beaming with the thought that the money would soon be in his fingers.

"Now read it," said Bill.

The men gathered close over Jack's shoulder as he began to read the letter aloud—all their interest centered on the missive by which they expected to obtain the money for the boy's ransom.

Biff glanced furtively about him, his heart beating fast. Stepping quietly and cautiously behind them, while their attention



was centered on the letter, he suddenly bounded away through the woods as fast as his swift legs would carry him. At the sound of cracking twigs under his feet, the men looked up and caught a glimpse of a fleeting figure darting away among the trees.

"Ketch him," screamed Big Bill, and the trio broke into a run in pursuit of the boy. On they sped, guided by the sound of crashing bushes ahead of them, and now and then a fleeting sight of the boy as he raced through a clearer place in the forest.

Biff had been running along the top of the high ridge when he thought to throw his pursuers off his track by turning at right angles into a deep ravine. He plunged down the steep hill, slipping, sliding, and fighting his way through brush and briers, until at last he reached the bottom. Here he forced his way along the ravine through a tangled thicket choked with vines, bushes, and fallen trees. The effort to make progress under such difficulties was sapping his strength. Still onward he plunged, stumbling over boulders and fallen logs and struggling



through briers and branches which caught his hands and clothes and held him back. The terrific pace was telling on him. His breath came in gasps as he pressed onward. As he stopped a moment to catch his breath, he listened and the crash of bushes from behind warned him that his pursuers were gaining on him. He glanced wildly about for a way to escape. He decided to remount the high ridge and up its steep side he began to scramble. His footing on some disintegrated shale gave way and he fell and rolled to a spot nearly ten feet below. As he picked himself up to start again on his climb, a sharp pain like the thrust of a knife shot through his right ankle, which had been turned by his fall. From now on, he crawled upward on his hands and knees, making slow progress toward the summit. Grasping bushes and points of projecting rocks, he pulled himself, inch by inch and foot by foot, up the steep side of the hill with cut and bleeding hands. A loose rock accidentally dislodged by him went crashing down to the bottom. He lay still—panting for breath. Far below, he caught a glimpse of the men



beginning their ascent. His heart sank within him, but steeling his muscles with his indomitable will he resumed his upward journey. His knees were bleeding from contact with the sharp rocks and his uniform was in shreds. Still upward he mounted until the summit appeared just over his head. With a mighty effort he dragged himself to the top, where he lay gasping for breath. He slowly rose to his feet and hobbled along the ridge in the direction of camp. The intense pain in his ankle prevented him from making rapid progress. He stopped a moment to rest his injured limb and as he did so, the sound of pursuit grew closer. He knew that his capture was a matter of only a few minutes. He looked about him, like a hunted animal, for some chance to escape. He was standing under a giant oak whose top reached far above the surrounding trees. He hobbled around it and discovered a hollow extending for fifteen feet above the ground, in a long vertical opening through which he might squeeze. He decided to hide himself here, but on second thought he realized that it would be the very



place they would look for him. He said half aloud, "I'll try to climb to the top and hide there."

Suiting the action to the word, he began the ascent by bracing his hands and knees between the sides of the opening and slowly and laboriously ascended until he reached the lowest limb, which he grasped and drew himself upon. Pausing a moment for breath, he again mounted from limb to limb until the foliage screened him from view below. Here he rested astride a limb, grasping the trunk of the tree for support. His ear caught the sound of running feet below him.

"He ain't far away," he heard Big Bill pant.

"No, I seen him runnin' under this big tree," volunteered One-Eye Ed.

The trio stopped, listened, and looked about them. Big Bill's eye rested on the hollow of the tree. He dashed toward it and peered in, but turned away with a look of disappointment as he growled, "He's a slippery eel, he is."

"Mebbe he climbed a tree!" exclaimed



Three-Finger Jack, with a sudden inspiration.

"Yes, he might. Everybody look," directed Big Bill, and the three men began to search the treetops with their eyes.

Biff's heart stopped beating. He held his breath and crouched close to the trunk at the top of the tree where he was sitting. He could hear the footsteps of the men as they walked around the tree, and he realized that three pairs of eyes were trying to spy out his hiding place. The suspense was terrible. He felt faint and sick.

"I know he must be up there," he heard One-Eye Ed say, "'cause I didn't see him go no furdur."

Suddenly he heard the voice of Three-Finger Jack exclaim: "There he is! I see him!"

"Where?" shouted Big Bill.

"Right there," replied Jack, pointing his finger through a break in the foliage to the spot where Biff sat.

Big Bill flashed his gun, and aiming it at the boy, fired instantly.

The bullet embedded itself in the tree



trunk not six inches from the boy's head. Bill's overeagerness resulted in the bad marksmanship which saved Biff's life.

"Hold on there," yelled Jack, grabbing Bill's wrist, as he was taking aim a second time. "Don't croak the kid now. We need him to get the coin."

"You're right," returned Bill, regretfully. "I forgot."

At the crack of the gun, Biff started from his perch and began to mount still higher, until he had reached the topmost part of the tree capable of supporting his weight. The slender limbs here swayed perilously under him. He braced himself in a fork made by two limbs and waited, listening intently for any sounds from below. Soon he heard Jack's voice floating up from the base of the tree, "We'll wait here. He's got to come down some time."

"Sure, he will," assented the other two. "We'll git him."

Biff's courage failed him as he realized his inability to remain long in his present position. For the first time he noticed that his hands were covered with clotted, dried



blood from the wounds made by rocks and briars. His ankle was swollen to nearly twice its normal size and throbbed violently with every pulsation of his heart. He muttered, "It's no use. I've got to go down."

He judged it to be nearly one o'clock. He was not hungry, but a terrible thirst raged within him. From his high position he swept the horizon with his eye. Far off to the south he saw the beautiful waters of the Meramec sparkling with the silver of sunlight.

"O, how I would like to have a drink of that water!" he thought. The peace of a glorious summer day was in the air, while danger and death hovered near him. He turned his head and through a break in the distant trees he clearly saw the line of tents of his camp on the side of a far-off hill.

A sudden inspiration seized him. He pulled his hunting knife from his pocket and began to cut the leaves and branches about him until the top of the tree near his seat was quite bare. Next he cut a small straight branch, three feet long, to which he tied his



handkerchief—like a flag. He began to wave the flag slowly back and forth, from one side of his head to the other, while he kept his eyes directed toward the tents. He continued to wave until his arms ached, but there was no response from camp.

The troop had finished dinner and were lolling about camp resting from their vigorous hike of the morning. Mr. Hudson was in his tent busy with troop records. Bunny Brown was snap-shotting various groups as they stood or lay about in picturesque attitudes. Curly Coover was trying out his new pair of field glasses. He placed them to his eyes and swept the horizon to the east and south. Deacon Parsons, standing beside him, was looking to the southwest when he said, "O, Curly, look at the white bird flying around the top of that tall tree on the ridge over there," indicating the direction with his finger.

Curly focused his glasses on the spot indicated and exclaimed: "It's not a bird, it's a flag. Somebody is trying to signal us."

"Here's my flag," said Deacon, seizing it



from a rustic table where it lay. "I'll wave the 'Ready' signal and see if he answers."

As Deacon waved the flag, Curly was astonished to see through his lenses the flag in the tree repeat the signal and then it began to send this message, which Curly called off as Deacon wrote it down: "Robbers have got me treed send help quick biff."

This astounding message sent a shock throughout the camp. It flew from lip to lip. Consternation reigned among the boys. Fuzzy remarked, "There's nothing to it—he's playing a joke on you."

"No," replied Curly, "Biff doesn't joke. It must be serious. I thought he was in camp. I hadn't missed him until now."

Mr. Hudson was informed, and knowing Biff's disinclination to play practical jokes, he decided that he was in trouble and that he must go to him at once. Immediately the entire troop clamored to go. They fell in, double column, and started toward the southwest at a swinging gait, with the Scout Master leading the way. As they looked back toward camp, they saw Fuzzy Markham idly swinging in a hammock.



After Biff had sent the message, he resumed his vigil, fearful that some suggestion by one of the trio would cause them to change their plans—they might climb the tree after him or Bill might again make him a target for his murderous weapon! He listened, with straining ears, to catch every sound which came up from below. Their conversation was carried on in such low tones that he could not distinguish it. Shooting pains darted from his ankle up to his knee. His legs and arms ached from the strain of his cramped position. Presently he heard the voice of Bill saying, "That's my trick. I trumped it"; and he prayed that they would continue their card game; it would prevent them from plotting new mischief against him. The three men played on, unconscious of what had taken place above their heads. They still continued to wrangle and play with an intenseness which rendered them oblivious of everything else. They were so engrossed in their game that the troop was almost upon them, when they looked up and saw with astonished eyes what appeared to be a company of militia charg-



ing down upon them. With a startled yell, Big Bill sprang to his feet and cried, "The soldiers! Beat it!" and the trio broke into a run like frightened sheep. There was no time to take a second glance at their pursuers when fear added speed to their progress. Down the ridge ran the three men, seeking to escape the fusillade of bullets which they feared every moment would lodge in their backs. They plunged onward toward the southwest until the forest swallowed them up from sight.

Biff descended to the lowest limb of the tree and then dropped into the waiting arms of his chief.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE MASCOT

It was an unwritten law of the troop that every member of it should have a name, other than that by which he was known to the world. Many of the boys were already labeled with appropriate nicknames. A few appeared without the required sobriquet, and an early council of scouts would be called to select an appropriate name. They entered into this task with the keenest zest, and great was the rejoicing when they selected some name of especial appropriateness. Dicky Byrd expressed their sentiment when he remarked, "You've got to like a feller to give him a name that sticks." In harmony with this sentiment, names were bestowed in a spirit of comradeship which added honor and distinction to the fortunate recipients. They gloried in these tokens of good fellowship, and a newcomer quickly sensed the situation and felt deeply hurt if his sobriquet



were not granted with the promptness which his boyish fancy demanded.

Happy Holmes had borne his felicitous name ever since he could remember. Even his father and mother had long ceased to call him Charles. He was a born optimist, with a natural fund of humor, and his round face beamed like a continuously full moon. Deacon John Parsons gained his distinction partly on account of his surname and partly by reason of his serious nature and a dignity seldom seen in a boy of his years. When Carpenter joined the troop he was asked his name by the Scout Master. He replied, "My name is Archibald Van Courtland Carpenter." Happy Holmes remarked in a whisper, "That's too long a name to drag around; let's call him 'Girlie' for short," and "Girlie" it became. Alfred Ruddy was promptly dubbed "Buddy" because it rhymed with Ruddy and because it suited his size and general characteristics. Herman Meyers was called "Heinie" because "Herman wasn't German enough." Arthur Kingsley was labeled "Kid" on account of his diminutive size and delayed mental development.



The reason for Bacon's appellation of "Piggie" is obvious. "Slim" Anderson was thus named because of his slender physique. Henry Brooks and Arthur Ford were called "Fatty" and "Skinny" respectively, because they were both large and fat. Edward Clark had always been called "Teddy." George Parker had long been known to his schoolmates as "Red"—based on the color of his hair. Edward Markham was given the name "Fuzzy" to conform with the fuzzy hat he wore when he joined the troop. William McGregor's title of "Scotty" was a tribute to his Scotch ancestry. "Bunny" instead of Edwin Brown seemed to meet his requirements. "Windy" Day instead of Winton Day was a play on words too rich to be overlooked. "Chick" superseded Charles Mason because of the cockiness of the owner. "Curly" Coover's legal name was George, but his mother disregarded that name so long ago that he forgot he ever had any other name than "Curly." Arthur Farmer acquired "Rube" from a slang designation of the occupation represented by his surname. "Jigs" Young acquired the name



through his ability to execute a little dance called a jig, with which he entertained and amused his companions as often as he could obtain an audience. When we are told that Joseph "Stuffy" Wyman was stout and a "pow'ful feeder," as Cæsar expressed it, we see the propriety of his name. "Dicky" Byrd had entirely supplanted "Richard" ever since his parents abandoned his original cognomen. William Weaver, the troop bugler, was appropriately called "Toots." Willis Allen was called "Bing" for the sole reason that the troop wished it on him. William LeRoy brought the name of "Boysey" with him from home. Walter Black was given the title of "Whitie" evidently for the purpose of contrast and to please those boys who had a keen appreciation of dramatic values. Doctor John Scott, a young physician, occupied the post of troop surgeon and the boys promptly and unanimously dubbed him "Bones." The name "Rags" for the troop mascot, an Airedale terrier, spoke volumes concerning his personal appearance. His shaggy hair stood out around his face like unkempt whiskers. His ap-



pearance indicated that he needed a hair cut. He gloried in his name and manifested his delight by a vigorous wagging of his stumpy tail whenever he heard a friendly voice address him by this disreputable title. If he looked like a tramp, it did not follow that he had any of the characteristics of that unsavory class of citizens, excepting an occasional attack of wanderlust. One such attack had nearly cost him his life.

One day, while he was still an overgrown pup, the wanderlust in his soul prompted him to leave the good home of his master and stray to a distant part of the city. He saw new and wonderful sights. He got acquainted with new dogs who were not on his calling list. He chased more strange cats that afternoon than he had ever pursued in a whole week before. He barked at many flocks of sparrows which eluded his scurrying rushes. Altogether he was enjoying the experience immensely. He made up his mind to take these excursions daily. How far he had traveled he did not know. The people, the streets, and the houses were unfamiliar to him. When at last a faint sug-



gestion of hunger made him think of home and the good bones he always found there, he realized that he did not know what direction home was in. He was lost! A terrible fear seized him. He began to run wildly about, up one street and down another, looking for some familiar landmark which would enable him to locate his home. He thought he recognized a house far down the street. With a bark of joy he dashed toward it. On he sped, when, suddenly, crossing a side street, a delivery wagon whirled around the corner, and before he could stop, or even swerve his body out of danger, the heavy wheels struck him and he was crushed to the pavement. A stinging pain, unlike anything he had ever experienced, shot through his right leg. He could hear the rattle of the retreating wagon. He tried to rise, but fell back—weak and limp. He called for help by a series of sharp, agonizing yelps. Buddy Ruddy, returning home from school, had witnessed the accident half a block away, and came running to his assistance.

“What’s the matter, doggie?” he inquired, sympathetically, as he cautiously patted his



head. The dog answered with a piteous whine and licked Buddy's hand as he looked up with great brown eyes that said, "I'm badly hurt; can't you help me?" Buddy understood this dog language and said, "All right, doggie, I'll carry you home and fix you up," and gathering up the dog in his arms he started for his home, two blocks distant. On the next block he met Bunny Brown, who volunteered his assistance. The dog was transferred carefully to Bunny's arms, who completed the journey and deposited his burden in the kitchen of Buddy's home. Here the boys produced their first-aid package and proceeded to examine the patient. They found a fracture of the right fore leg. They made splints from soft pine kindling and set the limb, placed the splints in position and bound it with bandages so that it could not be moved. A cut was discovered on the top and near the left side of his head; this was washed, then dressed with an antiseptic, cooling salve and bandaged with white strips of linen until the dog looked as if he were wearing a nightcap.

During all this time a pan of milk, which



Buddy had obtained, sat untouched under the dog's nose. Little whines and yelps betrayed the pain he was suffering, but he never took his intelligent eyes off his new-found friends, who, he realized, were doing all in their power to help him. When they had completed their first-aid to the injured dog they placed him in a corner of the kitchen floor on the silk sofa pillows which Buddy brought from the parlor, and patted and stroked his head with many expressions of sympathy. Suddenly Bunny said, "Maybe we haven't done it right; we ought to get Bones to see him."

"Yes, I'll phone him right away," assented Buddy as he dashed up the stairs. The excited boy got the physician on the telephone and sputtered out his story. All Doctor Scott could catch of his conversation were these disjointed expressions: "Buddy Ruddy—right leg broken—come at once."

Gathering up his surgical instrument satchel, he rushed to Buddy's home as fast as his automobile could carry him. He felt sorry for Buddy as he recalled what a fine,



manly fellow he was, and he hoped, for the boy's sake, that the injury would not prove as serious as indicated.

Arriving at the home, he was met at the door by Buddy. The surgeon looked at the boy in amazement and said: "Why, some one telephoned me you had broken your leg. I am glad it is not true."

"No," answered Buddy, "I said the dog's leg."

"O," said Doctor Scott, with a tone of relief in his voice.

"Please come back here, Doctor," continued Buddy, leading the way to the kitchen. This was the doctor's first experience as a veterinary surgeon, but one glance at Buddy's earnest, eager face decided him to take the case in spite of professional ethics or loss of professional dignity. The boys quickly told the story of the accident and their efforts at first aid. Examining their surgical work the doctor said, "You have done splendidly, boys, but perhaps we had better reset the limb to make sure it is properly done."

Removing the splints, the surgeon reset



and rebandaged the broken leg, leaving the splints extended beyond his paw so that the dog could not use it in walking, and cautioned the boys to put him in a small box in which he could not turn around or get on his feet, and thus prevent injury to the fractured limb. The physician then left, after asking the boys to telephone him if his services were needed again. The two chums obtained a box of the required size, removed one end and fastened a movable screen over it to give the dog air, food, and water and tenderly placed him in it, on the bed of silk sofa cushions, and nailed down the top of the box. For the first time since his injury the dog lapped a few mouthfuls of milk and looked up at his new masters with gratitude and loyalty shining in his beautiful brown eyes. The fractured bone knit rapidly from day to day and his complete recovery was only a matter of time. Buddy bestowed the name of "Rags" on his new friend, and their friendship grew with every hour.

It finally occurred to the boy that the dog had an owner, and that it would not be right for him to keep him as his own. A pang of



regret came over him as he realized that the dog must soon go out of his life and be restored to his rightful owner. Duty overpowered sentiment and he inserted an advertisement in the "Found" column of a daily newspaper, in response to which the owner appeared at Buddy's home the next evening to claim his dog. Buddy told him the story of the accident and of the assistance he and Bunny had rendered. He spoke of his affection for Rags, which was returned by the animal.

"I love that dog, Mr. Smith," asserted the boy, "and I think you ought to let me keep him until he is entirely well. I don't think you could move him now; it might break his leg over again." As Buddy made this statement, he fondly stroked the head of the dog, who showed his love by licking the boy's hand and looking at him with eyes shining with the light of a gratitude which he could not otherwise express. The owner realized the deep affection which had developed between these two chums, and he said generously: "I won't take him from you, my boy. He already thinks more of you than he ever



did of me. You saved his life and you have earned your title to him. I am going to make you a present of him."

"O, thank you, Mr. Smith," returned Buddy eagerly. "I'll take awful good care of him."

"I am sure you will," replied Mr. Smith, "and now, good night. I wish you much pleasure in your new friend."

The young dog made rapid recovery under the careful nursing of Buddy, and as he gained in health and strength, so the love of the boy and the dog for each other grew. They were constant companions and playmates and many a trouble and difficulty did the boy whisper in the ear of the dog, who wagged his stumpy tail sympathetically and smiled as if to say, "Don't worry, Buddy; it will come out all right."

Rags was Buddy's companion on all the hikes taken by the troop, and it was on these occasions that he ingratiated himself into the affections of every scout by his intelligence and playful disposition. It is not strange, therefore, that when some one proposed that a mascot be selected for the troop



the boys turned toward the dog with one accord and yelled, "Rags." The startled dog bounded from the spot where he had been lying, and with keen alertness stood at "attention." It was thus that he was elected to membership in Troop 20, Boy Scouts of America.

The Scout Master had retired to his tent, where he was busy with troop records and with forming plans for the morrow. The boys were lolling about under the shade of the big trees which surrounded the camp, talking, resting, and reading. Happy Holmes suggested: "Say, fellows, do you know that everybody in this troop has got a nickname, except Mr. Hudson? I don't think it's right to leave him out."

Chick Mason assented by saying: "Neither do I. He'll feel hurt if we don't treat him as well as the rest of the troop."

"All right," agreed Heinie Meyers, "let's give him a name."

The others gathered around in a large circle and seated themselves on the ground.



Bunny Brown suggested, "Deacon, you take charge of the meeting."

Adjutant Parsons said, "Come to order, fellows, and let's hear suggestions for a name for our Scout Master."

Happy Holmes said, "I think 'Prexy' would be a good name for him."

Rube Farmer suggested "Long Legs."

"No, that won't do," asserted Scotty McGregor; "it ain't dignified enough."

"Well, let's call him 'Captain,'" urged Girlie Carpenter.

"We ain't no troop of soldiers," declared Bunny Brown; "we're a troop of Boy Scouts."

"What's the matter with 'Professor,' or 'Daddy'?" inquired Dutch.

"I think 'Big Nose' would be a better name for him," asserted Bing Allen.

None of these suggestions were received with favor by the boys, who, without analyzing their mental processes, were conscious that they did not satisfy the requirements of their tastes or reasons. At last little Dicky Byrd spoke up: "Let me have a chance, fellows. Supposin' we were a tribe of wild In-



dians living in wigwams way out West; and we were hunting game, and fishing and scalping white people for a living. We would have a big chief at our head, wouldn't we?"

"Yes," answered the boys in chorus.

"Well, if we were goin' to elect a big chief to-day, who would we elect?"

"Why, Mr. Hudson, of course," came from all parts of the circle.

"Well, then let's call him 'Chief' Hudson," concluded Dicky.

This suggestion met with instant favor and was carried unanimously with a whoop.

Deacon Parsons then said: "Fellows, I think we ought to appoint a committee of one to officially notify Mr. Hudson that we have voted a new name for him."

With the assent of the scouts, the Adjutant announced, "I will appoint Dicky as the committee, in honor of his selecting the name."

The boys, with Dicky at their head, approached the Scout Master's tent, when their spokesman, with some trepidation, said in a weak, trembling voice, "Mr. Hudson, you



know everybody in the troop has got a nickname 'cept you, and we knew you didn't want to be left out, and we didn't want you to feel hurt, so we voted to call you 'Chief.' "

A smile played around the corners of the Scout Master's mouth as he arose and said, pleasantly, "I thank you, Scouts, for this compliment. The distinction you have conferred upon me by this title will add new responsibilities to those I already have. I assure you I appreciate my new honors highly, and I shall do my best to measure up to them. I thank you heartily for this expression of your friendship. Now I know that I am one of you."

Curly Coover proposed three cheers for the "Chief," and they were given with such suddenness and vehemence that Cæsar fell over a pile of pots and pans, the loud clatter of which joined in swelling the praise for the new chief. They little realized that their Chief would, on the morrow, be the principal factor in the rescue of the troop from the most perilous situation which had ever confronted them.



## CHAPTER XIII

### PRISONERS IN A CAVE

REVEILLE sounded clear and shrill at sunup, assailing the ears of the sleeping boys like a fire alarm. In spite of nine hours' sleep, there were some boys who were oblivious to all sounds. "O, gee!" yawned Red Parker, sleepily, "is it time to get up? It seems like I just went to bed."

Girlie Carpenter was quickly up, and grabbing Slim Anderson by the leg began to drag him, protesting, to the door of the tent. Buddy Ruddy was riding astride Teddy Clark, using a towel as a whip. In another tent Heine Meyers was tickling Windy Day's feet with a straw, while Rags was running from one tent to another, barking furiously with excitement and pulling blankets from sleepy scouts with his teeth as his way of expressing his disapproval of late sleeping. Soon the whole camp was awake and then began another busy day.

Headed by Mr. Hudson, the troop started



on a run for the swimming hole which resounded with plunk-splash-plunk, as scout after scout plunged into the cool waters. A thorough scrubbing with soap followed, then a great splashing in the water and the boys climbed out on the bank, where vigorous rubbing with towels followed. The scouts were now thoroughly awake; then a race back to camp and hurried dressing. "Who's got my shirt?" rang out one voice.

"I'm not your valet," answered his neighbor.

"I've only got one shoe," complained Scotty McGregor.

"Why didn't your father buy you two?" retorted Bunny Brown.

At last each boy found his various articles of wearing apparel—exactly where he had left them—and soon thirty smiling, hungry faces were ready to be fed with the initial meal of the day.

The cook detail for the day consisted of Deacon Parsons, Red Parker, and Boysey LeRoy. The detail was changed every day, which arrangement permitted each boy in turn to learn cooking by actual experience



under the immediate direction and tutelage of the negro chef, John Gordon, who was promptly dubbed "Cæsar" by the boys.

Cæsar was forty-five, fat, good-natured and an excellent cook, having learned his "profession"—he always called it his "profession"—during his twenty-three years' experience in the dining car service of one of our transcontinental railroads. "He certainly can cook flap-jacks," said Bing Allen, and this expressed the unanimous sentiment of the troop. The first day in camp Gordon was seen coming over the hill with a load of firewood on his back, which he was bringing into camp. Toots Weaver remarked, "Here comes Cæsar crossing the Alps," and the name became a fixture ever afterward. Not the least of his qualifications for his job was his never-failing happy disposition. He took the raillery of the boys and the many tricks they played on him with uniform good nature. He took pride in his ability to cook and was highly pleased at his appointment as instructor of the cook detail. On one occasion, when preparing dinner, he had cooked a pot of delicious soup. Four scouts



decided to play a practical joke on him. Obtaining a large kettle, while Cæsar had gone to the commissary tent for provisions, the boys quickly emptied the soup in the kettle and hid it behind a clump of bushes and filled up the original pot with boiling water. When Cæsar returned he sampled the soup, as was his custom before serving it, and a look of dismay spread over his face.

“Well! for de lan’s sake! dem soup bones mus’ be pow’ful weak. Dey ain’t no strength in dis soup a-tall, a-tall. It tastes like water.”

The knowing grins on the faces of four scouts directed suspicion toward them at once. Mr. Hudson appeared and guessed the cause of the trouble. Turning to the suspected scouts, he said, “Boys, what have you done to this soup?”

Whitie Black shifted guiltily from one foot to the other as he replied, “We hid it in the bushes and filled the pot with hot water.”

“Guilty scouts, raise your hands and ’fess up,” said Mr. Hudson.

Without a moment’s hesitation the hands of Whitie Black, Jigs Young, Stuffy Wy-



man, and Windy Day were thrust high in the air, for the members of Troop 20 were "on honor," and it was an unwritten law of the troop that every boy should "tell on" himself.

Turning to Toots Weaver, the Scout Master said, "Blow the mess call."

In a twinkling scouts poured out of tents and took their places noisily at the mess table. After grace had been said by the Scout Master, he announced, "We have two kinds of soup for dinner to-day—thick and thin soup. Every scout will be served with the kind for which he has expressed a preference, and inasmuch as Scouts Black, Young, Wyman, and Day have expressed their fondness for thin soup by actions which speak louder than words, the cook detail will serve them plentifully with that soup."

The four guilty scouts looked sheepishly at their comrades, but they manfully swallowed their portions of water-soup while the others taunted them with praise of the real soup.

"My! but this soup is good," said Bing Allen.



"It's the best I ever tasted," volunteered Piggie Bacon.

"Cæsar will get a medal for making such fine soup," said Teddy Clark.

"Say, fellers," admonished Happy Holmes, addressing the four culprits, "don't gorge yourselves to death just because you like it."

A shout of laughter greeted this sarcasm, in which the guilty four joined half-heartedly. Cæsar looked appeased at the punishment meted out to the scouts and remarked to everyone in general and to no one in particular, "I bet dem scouts don't come pesti-catin' roun' my kitchen no mo'. He! he! he!" he chuckled, "Mistah Hudson sho' knows how to fix 'em."

The event of the day, which filled the boys with anticipation, was a hike to Big Cave, three miles away. The entrance to the cave was in a cliff facing the Meramec River. The troop fell in line and marched away through the woods and the tedium of the trip was relieved by stopping now and then to listen to the Scout Master's description of some tree before them. They reached the



river at a point some distance below the cliffs and picked their way along its base upstream until they saw the mouth of the cave above them.

"Look," exclaimed Bunny Brown, pointing up the river, "somebody is swimming there."

They saw the heads of three men above the water, but the distance was too great to recognize them. In another moment the swimmers caught sight of the troop, and quickly made for shore to seek the cover of protecting bushes growing along the bank, which would screen them from view.

The troop now scaled the face of the cliff, with much effort, and headed by the Scout Master, they plunged into the darkness of the cave, flashing their electric lamps. The interior, near the mouth, opened out into a wide room through the center of which ran a little stream which poured its clear, cold waters in a sparkling cascade into the river below. Here they found a bed of leaves showing the impressions where three bodies had lain. At one side they saw a battered tin bucket, three empty tomato cans, and



some chicken bones picked bare. On the floor, beyond the bed, lay three suits of tattered clothes, including shoes, and three revolvers fully loaded. The latter were appropriated by Mr. Hudson, who remarked, as he slipped them into his pocket, "I think I had better take these with me."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to take the shoes also," he continued, and three pairs of shoes were passed over to the boys to carry.

They now proceeded farther into the cave, where the sides became narrower and the roof lower, and soon they were crawling on all fours, single file, along the ledge of rocks at the side of the stream. Twenty-five yards of this kind of travel brought them into a great subterranean chamber, ranging in width from seventy-five to one hundred feet. It was a huge amphitheater of marvelous beauty which surrounded them. They were in a great underground cathedral, carved out of solid rock by the hand of nature.

The floor of this cavern contained a large pool of water, formed by the stream running through the cave. Here the troop stopped and in response to a command of



Mr. Hudson, they concentrated the light of their search lamps on the ceiling of this wonderful room. Many crystal stalactites hung from the roof of the cavern and glittered in the brilliancy of the electric lights until they resembled huge icicles.

The Scout Master explained to the boys that they had been formed, through the countless ages since the earth began, by the constant dripping from the roof of water saturated with calcareous matter which gradually became deposited on the roof and slowly, through the centuries, formed this stone icicle.

Water was still dripping from these stalactites, and directly under many of them were stalagmites of various sizes, in the form of inverted icicles.

Biff struck a long stalagmite with his staff which gave forth a clear musical sound like the soft, low peal of a bell. Soon other boys were following his example, until the great subterranean amphitheater resounded with musical notes like the chimes of distant church bells.

They shouted up to the vaulted dome of



the cavern, and listened to the echoes of their own voices hurled back at them with staccato distinctness. By focusing their lamps on one spot at a time, they illuminated new wonders in rapid succession.

Large caverns and rooms led from this gigantic amphitheater in many directions, apparently carved by the hand of man, but which Mr. Hudson explained were caused by the erosion of the water.

Skirting the side of the pool, they sounded its depth with their staves, showing it to be from two to six feet. Gradually they worked their way around to the opposite side and again met the little stream which fed it.

Here the cavern assumed its normal size, at times wide, now narrow. There were places where the walls came so close together that two scouts could not go abreast, and the little stream occupied the entire floor between the walls.

It was here that the boys were compelled to pick their way carefully over the stones which lined the bed of the stream. Presently the walls widened again, leaving a bench on one side to serve as a footway. A little



farther on the cavern contracted narrowly, and their heads at times scraped the roof.

Then they came to a fork in the cavern showing two passage ways, both of which appeared to be of equal size and stretching away an interminable distance in the darkness.

Slim Anderson inquired, "Which of these roads shall we take?"

"It will be safer for us to take the right hand branch, which contains the stream," was the reply of the Master.

Flashing their lamps, they plunged into the blackness of this channel, which decreased in size until the boys were again on hands and knees. The troop proceeded slowly until the passage contracted to such an extent that the larger boys scraped their backs on the roof. They came to a stretch of floor covered with muddy slime, and it was then decided it would be impracticable to proceed farther, so the command "About, face" was given, and for the first time in their lives, the troop executed this command on hands and knees.

They retraced their steps and were again



back in the huge amphitheater through which they had recently passed. Leaving this, they again followed the stream downward, which brought them to the narrow, low passage which would soon lead them into the room in which evidences of habitation were seen on their inward journey. Rounding a sharp turn, they were confronted with a pile of bowlders, great and small, completely filling the passage way from floor to roof. They were wedged together closely and securely. It was evident they could not have fallen from above. They had been placed there by human hands during the two hours since their entrance into the cave.

"We're walled in!" exclaimed Biff, who was in the lead.

"Trapped!" gasped Bunny, peering over his shoulder, his eyes wide with fright.

Word was quickly passed to those in the rear and the seriousness of the situation was reflected in their grave faces. Walled up in a cavern, without food!

Mr. Hudson now came to the front and made a close inspection of the obstruction.

"I'm afraid our three friends have a



grudge against us," he remarked. "Well," he continued, "we'll have to get to work and see what we can do."

Biff was behind him with an electric light flashing against the wall. Mr. Hudson began his assault, at the top of the wall, on the smaller stones which he slowly dislodged with much effort. They were passed back, one by one, and carried to the larger chamber behind them. A small hole finally was torn through and they breathed a sigh of relief—but their work had just begun.

Pausing for rest, they heard the patter of three pairs of bare feet moving beyond the wall. Biff flashed his light through the opening into the darkness beyond, but could see nothing. As he was about to withdraw his head he caught a glimpse of Big Bill's brawny arm, from behind a jutting rock, hurling a stone full in his face. He jerked his head backward and dropped below the opening, as the stone struck the top of the wall and rolled to the floor at his feet with a clatter which reverberated throughout the cave.

Mr. Hudson instantly drew one of the re-



volvers which he had found on entering the cave and aimed it in the direction from which the stone came. The roar of the discharge hurt their ears. Then all was still. He peered ahead through the gloom, but nothing was visible. A second stone, hurled by an unseen hand, grazed the chief's head and again his revolver spit fire. He now focused his lamp on the projecting rock behind which the men were hiding and again his weapon barked, leaving a thin streak of lead along its face. He heard a gasp as the bullet sung past their faces as the men flattened themselves close against the wall. Keeping the face of the rock illuminated, he trained his revolver on it, with his finger poised on the trigger.

The edge of a sleeve cautiously appeared from behind the rock and twice the automatic spoke in rapid succession—then silence reigned.

After a time Biff and his chief resumed their attack on the wall, each working with his left hand only, for the light and the weapon must be kept trained on the rock. Slowly they dislodged the boulders, pulling



them down in the passage way behind them where they were removed by their comrades. Like a flash, a stone sped through the opening and struck Biff on the head. His light dropped from his limp hand, as a fusillade of shots was returned by his chief in the direction from which the missile came.

Biff dropped to the floor of the cavern, but soon picked himself up, rubbed his head, and said: "It's only a scratch. It was a glancing blow." But the blood which trickled down his forehead belied his words. He insisted on resuming his position. Again the lamp and the weapon were trained on the hiding place and held there—minute after minute. Suddenly, a hand grasping a stone, followed by a brawny arm, was swung around the corner of the rock. At the same instant a bullet sped from the waiting weapon, followed by a yell of pain as the arm fell limply.

When the roar of the report had died away they heard the patter of bare feet running rapidly toward the mouth of the cave. Free from interruption, they now made good progress against the wall which blocked their way. Piece by piece it was removed until



they were able to clamber over it and passed out to the mouth of the cave. Here they stopped and looked about them, but no trace of the men could be seen. They descended the cliff and as they walked along the shore they found the print of bare feet in the sand and mud, pointing down stream. The troop followed the trail for half a mile, then turned to the north toward camp. As they were about to leave the river, Bunny asked, "What are we going to do with these?" pointing to three pairs of shoes slung over his back.

"Throw 'em in the river," replied Biff, and the boy flung them far out into the center of the stream.

Then the troop took up their march back to camp.

"That's the last I'll ever see of Big Bill again," announced Biff with certainty. But he little suspected that this man was again to enter his life in a very unusual way and cause him the most poignant sorrow it had ever been his lot to endure.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE SCOUT MASTER'S STORY

It was evening and the troop had assembled around the camp fire, piled high with dry wood. The flames shot upward into the night and danced with quivering light, illuminating the surrounding forest and furnishing an indescribable sense of security and comfort to those within its influence.

The stillness of night hovered over them, broken only by the crackle of burning wood and the hoots of screech owls in the surrounding trees. Nothing furnishes such stimulus to the imagination as a camp fire. It calls into play all the mysticism and mystery of the human mind. It discovers the hidden wellsprings of romance, legend, and adventure. It inspires the art of the storyteller as nothing else can do and furnishes a perfect stage setting for the dramatic recital about to be presented.

It was on such an occasion as this that



Biff, addressing Mr. Hudson, asked, "Won't you tell us a story?"

"Yes," repeated the other members of the troop in chorus. "A story! A story!"

"What shall it be?" inquired the Scout Master.

"An Indian story," came the answer from all parts of the circle. "Tell us a *true* story."

"Very well," replied the Scout Master, "I will tell you the story of an Indian boy."

The members of the troop settled themselves comfortably on logs or stretched out at full length on the ground and awaited with keen interest this story:

"After the close of the Revolutionary War, and near the beginning of the nineteenth century, a tribe of Indians called the Ozaws lived and hunted in the Ozark Mountains near the Maromeg River, which was the Indian name for the river now known as the Meramec.

"This tribe maintained their village on the bank of the river seventy or eighty miles above the place where it emptied itself into the Father of Waters. Here they hunted and fished, to supply themselves with food,



and trapped the valuable fur-bearing animals whose skins they conveyed in canoes, at the close of the hunting season in the spring, down the Maromeg River to a trading post conducted by the Frenchman, Jean Courtois, who gave them in exchange guns, ammunition, beads, blankets, hunting knives, and crude cooking utensils. The Indians then returned to their village and watched their squaws plant a few acres of zea or mais—the names given by them to what we know as corn—in the fertile valleys near the river.

“They subsisted chiefly on game, fish, and zea, to which they added wild rice (which grew plentifully in certain swampy places) together with nuts, berries, and roots. The squaws performed all the manual labor of planting and harvesting the corn, gathering roots and nuts, and the preparation of the food, for it was considered beneath the dignity of a warrior and hunter to engage in such menial occupations. The squaws gathered apukwas, a kind of pliable wild rush, which they used in making mats to cover the dirt floors of their wigwams, and tanned the furs brought in by the hunters.



"The chief of the Ozaw tribe was renowned for his bravery and skill as a warrior and his prowess as a mighty hunter; one who had proven his right to command by innumerable victories on the battlefield against hostile Indian tribes. O-quin-taw was his name and the emblem of his chieftainship was a crest of five eagle feathers dyed a brilliant red with the juice of poke berries. He occupied the largest wigwam in the village, at the door of which stood a pole surmounted by a stuffed eagle. The floor of his tepee was carpeted with a profusion of buffalo robes used as bedding, while the walls were lined with skins of panther, beaver, otter, deer, bear, and wildcat—the trophies of his successful marksmanship.

"His family consisted of his wife, his daughter, Tah-kee, fifteen years old, and his son, Tonk-a, nearly thirteen years of age.

"O-quin-taw's hopes were all centered in the future of Tonk-a, who he prayed would grow up worthy to follow in his footsteps, and would prove, by his skill as a hunter and warrior, his right to succeed his father as chief of this mighty tribe.



"As a boy Tonk-a played with the other Indian boys and girls of the village, and he grew to be skilled in the use of the bow and arrow and frequently made short excursions into the surrounding country, during which he killed small game.

"He fashioned his own bows and arrows, including the arrowheads which he shaped from small pieces of flint, and bound them with a thong of deerskin in a fork split in the end of the arrowshaft. He had already passed the test for good eyesight by pointing out in the heavens the 'papoose' star on the 'squaw's' back, at the bend of the handle in the Great Dipper.

"For a long time he had been urging his father to give him permission to undergo the test required to qualify one as a hunter. This consisted in sending a boy alone into the distant forest, far beyond the village, armed with a bow and arrow, to kill and bring back, as proof of his skill as a hunter, the skin of big game, such as deer, elk, buffalo, bear, or panther.

"Late in the autumn, as Tonk-a's thirteenth birthday was approaching, O-quin-



taw gave him permission to undergo the test. Tonk-a, in accordance with the tribal custom, spent two days in fasting. This was known as the fast of virility, or coming to manhood. On the evening of the second day he walked far up the river along the limestone cliffs which bordered the stream and climbed on a rock jutting up from the base like a pulpit, which he had dedicated as his place of worship, to invoke the blessing of the Great Spirit on his journey.

“He reached the top of the rock amid the silence of the night, lighted only by the faint gleam of the twinkling stars that glowed in the heavens like fireflies.

“Standing erect, with his face to the east and with arms uplifted toward heaven, he offered this prayer: ‘O, Great Spirit, Father of all things, heed my prayer for the strength, the wisdom, and the fortitude necessary for this great test I am about to undergo. Grant me some of thy keenness of eye, fleetness of limb, and strength of arm to succeed as a hunter and bring renown upon my illustrious father and my beloved tribe.’

“The following morning he broke his fast



and began preparation for the journey, in which he was assisted by his mother and Tah-kee, both of whom loved him dearly, and keenly hoped for the success of his perilous adventure.

“He equipped himself with a bow, the strongest he was able to bend, a quiver full of arrows tipped with flint heads, a tomahawk made of flint and bound to a wood handle with buckskin thongs, and a steel hunting knife.

“His clothing consisted of a beaver-skin cap, buckskin coat, shirt and leggings, and buckskin moccasins, all of which had been made by the loving hands of his mother and sister. On his back he carried the tanned robe of a buffalo calf, to be used at night as his bed, and in the day it was the receptacle for parched zea and bear’s fat, to supplement the game which he expected to kill for food while on the expedition.

“Thus equipped he stepped forth, ready for the journey. O-quin-taw, standing tall and straight before the door of his wigwam, gave him this final benediction: ‘Go, Tonk-a, my son, and return a hunter.’



“His mother and Tah-kee accompanied him a short distance up the river, and as they turned to leave him they embraced him affectionately, while tears trickled down the face of the Indian mother as she saw the boy, who was so dear to her heart, plunge resolutely into the tangled forest.

“Tonk-a realized that there was little prospect of finding big game within two or three days’ journey from the village, and he therefore directed his energies to making progress in a northwesterly direction, following closely along the banks of the stream until he should get near the headwaters of the river where the hunters of his tribe had told him big game was to be found.

“For three days he plodded over hills and through valleys, cutting his way through tangled underbrush, fording creeks whose icy waters chilled his limbs, and again up over the low mountains until he came upon a section of country, great tracts of which had been burned over by Indian hunters, who thus destroyed the thick underbrush in the forest that they might the better see and kill the big game.



"Up to this time he had subsisted on two squirrels, a rabbit, and a prairie chicken, which he shot without difficulty, as he was able to approach within easy range.

"On the fourth day he sighted a herd of seven deer at the edge of a creek which flowed into the Maromeg River, but they discovered his presence long before he arrived within range and quickly disappeared into the forest.

"Again, about noon, he saw a magnificent elk striding majestically through the woods. Dropping on all fours, he began to crawl toward this stately monarch of the forest, but evidently he was not skilled in the art of stalking, as the cracking of a twig under his knee was heard by the animal, which soon placed himself at a safe distance from Tonk-a.

"Two buffaloes came within view on the fifth day, but he was unable to get within shooting distance. In the afternoon of that day he was startled by a crash of branches not a hundred yards away, and, looking up, he saw a magnificent elk rushing through the forest with a panther perched on his



shoulders and tearing at his neck with cruel fangs.

“From now on he caught sight of many deer, singly and in small herds, but they were always wary, keenly alert, and suspicious of the slightest unusual sound. Many times he attempted to crawl within shooting distance, screening himself from view behind rocks, trunks of trees, and fallen logs, but in each case the rustle of a leaf or the breaking of a twig under his foot alarmed his prey and sent them scampering away to safety.

“Toward evening he came upon another herd of deer, and arriving, after much laborious effort, at what he deemed to be within range of his arrow, he drew his bow and let fly, only to see the arrow strike the earth near the feet of the herd, which vanished like mist into the depths of the forest beyond.

“Thoroughly discouraged, he prepared to make camp for the night. He lighted a fire with two pieces of flint and while it was burning, he shot a squirrel which he skinned and impaled on a green stick and roasted over the glowing embers. This and the remains of the parched zea completed his meal, after



which he made a cornucopia from the bark of a cottonwood tree, and, filling it with sparkling water from the stream, he completed his meal. Collecting a supply of fallen wood to last during the night, he rolled himself in his buffalo robe and lay down to sleep, discouraged and disheartened at his ill success.

"During the night a blizzard, most unusual for that time of year, came sweeping down upon him, wrapping the earth in a mantle of ice. He arose the next morning and found his buffalo robe stiffened with sleet. After breakfast, during which he consumed the last of the zea, he again started out for the object of his quest.

"The glassy sheet of ice which covered the earth made traveling well-nigh impossible. While descending a hill, his footing gave away and he fell to the bottom, sustaining an injury to his left knee, which began to swell rapidly and caused him such pain that he could scarcely walk.

"This was the final blow to his hopes. It seemed to make success out of the question. He determined to work his way back to the Maromeg River and follow its course for



the sixty or more miles intervening between him and home.

"Limping painfully along, he reached the river and in the limestone bluffs bordering the stream he saw the opening of a cave—the one which we ourselves explored.

"The sky was still overcast. Cold, biting winds were blowing from the northwest, against which his buffalo robe afforded little protection.

"He decided to pass the night in this cave, and with much effort he climbed up to its mouth, which he found, within a few feet, opened into a large cavern. In one of the deep, narrow recesses in the side wall of the cave he made his bed. Collecting some wood, he built a fire in a semicircle in front of this recess, broiled a prairie hen which he had shot for his supper, and as he was about to lie down in his improvised bed, he caught a glimpse of two points of light moving far back in the blackness of the cave. They shone like tiny, dull electric lights. He knew that they came from the eyes of some animal—he could not tell whether a panther, a wolf, or a wildcat.



“Fixing an arrow in his bow, he took aim at the points of light and let it fly away into the darkness. He heard the clang of the arrow as it struck the rock floor of the cavern many yards beyond, and the lights disappeared.

“He knew that wild animals would not cross fire, so he left the cave and collected a quantity of dry fagots which he piled beside his bed, ready to replenish the fire throughout the night, and afford him protection against this unknown beast in the cave.

“He rolled himself in his robe and tried to sleep, but the pain in his knee, his ill success in the hunt, and his present danger all combined to drive away sleep.

“He replenished the fire again and again, and at some time during the night, wearied by his exertions of the day, he dropped off into a troubled sleep, from which he would awaken now and then with a start, replenish his fire, and lie down again.

“At the first break of dawn he was up and on his journey, keeping a sharp lookout for small game which would supply him with breakfast. His progress was slow; his cloth-



ing torn to rags by the thorns and briers through which he had been compelled to force his way; his moccasins were cut to ribbons by the sharp flint rocks and the ice over which he had passed during the two preceding days.

"The clouds at last began to break and he could see the sunshine filtering intermittently through the scurrying clouds, which caused a great joy to arise in his heart and gave him renewed hope and courage.

"All that day he traveled along the river bank and made camp under a sheltering bluff at night. The next morning he resumed his journey, and shortly afterward he was startled by a rushing sound in the underbrush ahead of him. Creeping cautiously forward, he peered through the woods and saw a buck running slowly and laboriously through a dry ravine which led down to the river. The buck suddenly fell, but with a mighty effort it regained its feet, and struggled to reach the river. He looked again, and as he looked, the deer swayed on trembling feet, then fell to the ground, and he saw the feathered end of an arrow sticking from



its side, while a stream of blood trickled down from the wound. The animal was making a desperate struggle to reach water. Again he staggered to his feet, went forward a few paces, and fell to his knees from sheer exhaustion.

"Tonk-a rushed down the declivity and stood near the wounded buck, still courageous in the face of death and struggling to reach the stream which would quench the terrible thirst that was clutching at his throat.

"Making a last mighty effort, the beast lifted himself to a half rising position and then fell over on his side. Tonk-a shouted with joy at his good fortune. Here was the buck whose skin he would carry back as evidence of his skill as a hunter. He pictured himself receiving the honor which had cost him days of pain and suffering. He fancied he could hear the plaudits of the tribe ringing in his ears. He felt that his fondest hope was about to be realized. Fixing an arrow to his bow, he hastened to the side of the prostrate buck and drew back the string to the full limit of his power, prepared to send



the arrow into its vitals and give the death blow to the fallen animal. With trembling fingers he drew his bow and aimed it at the heart of the buck, when, like a flash, the thought rushed through his brain that such a conquest would not be his. It rightfully belonged to the unknown hunter whose arrow was already embedded in the animal.

"Relaxing his bow, he threw it on the ground and said aloud: 'I am a chieftain's son. I will not cheat by taking the skin from a fallen buck. It would not be my trophy.'

"Placing his left foot on the side of the wounded deer, he grasped the arrow with both hands and with a mighty effort drew it from the bleeding side and threw it far out into the river. With his hunting knife, he cut a long strip of bark from a cottonwood tree, and forming it into a cup, he ran down to the edge of the river, filled it with water and brought it to the stricken animal, which looked at him with pleading eyes, expressing both fright and gratitude. Again and again he replenished the cup until the animal would drink no more.



"Picking up his bow, he slowly resumed his journey. All that day and the next he traveled, sighting deer and elk in the distance, but never able to get within range. Late in the afternoon of the following day he recognized as familiar land marks a bluff and a steeped rock in the river around which he had often fished, and he knew he was nearing home. Bitter chagrin and disappointment filled his soul as he realized he had been a failure, and he thought of the odium and reproaches which would be heaped upon him by the hunters of his tribe. He wondered what O-quin-taw would say. He could never look on his face again. He feared that his father would not give him another trial, and depressed by this thought he again plodded slowly toward home.

"About dusk he veered to the right which brought him again to the bank of the stream, and sweeping it with his eye, he was surprised to see, not twenty yards away, a herd of deer standing calmly at the water's edge, drinking their fill. The leader of the herd was a magnificent buck, with great spread-



ing, ten-pointed antlers, standing not far ahead of the does and fawns which accompanied him.

“With trembling fingers he drew an arrow from his quiver, fixed it to his bow, and, standing behind the trunk of a gigantic oak, waited until the buck should turn and present a fair mark.

“As he waited—it seemed hours to Tonk-a, but in reality it was only a few seconds—he trembled from head to foot, experiencing what is known as ‘buck ague,’ the nervous excitement of the inexperienced hunter encountering big game for the first time.

“Presently the buck turned broadside toward Tonk-a, who murmured to himself, ‘Tonk-a must be calm; Tonk-a must be strong; Tonk-a must shoot straight,’ and bending the bow to the limit of his strength, he let fly the arrow, which struck the buck full in the side just back of the shoulder and buried itself to the feather. With a mighty bound the buck took flight, followed by the frightened herd, and down the margin of the stream they dashed, up the shelving bank



and away through the forest until they were lost from view among the trees.

“Tonk-a ran down the bank and along the flat level over which the deer had passed and discovered blood. Following the track of the deer as rapidly as his injured knee would permit, he noticed that the drops of blood on the ground were closer together than they had been near the river; the speed of the animal was becoming slower.

“On he ran through the forest, anxious to reach the buck for another shot before darkness closed around him. The deer’s tracks told him that it had slowed down to a walk, and just beyond, they showed the animal had fallen to his knees, but, struggling, had regained his feet and staggered on. Another mile brought him within sight of the herd, which again bounded away through the forest, leaving their fallen leader mortally wounded on the ground. Forgetting his injured knee in his excitement, Tonk-a ran toward it. Affixing another arrow to his bow, he shot it full into the heart of the mighty monarch of the forest, which quivered and lay still.



"Darkness had now fallen, and Tonk-a skinned the animal by the light of his camp fire, leaving attached the antlers which he cut away from the skull with his tomahawk. A feeling of exultation as well as peace came over him, and after he had spread out his trophy on the ground and had admired its beauty, he stood in the center of the skin, turned his face to the east and with arms uplifted toward heaven, prayed: 'Great Spirit, thou hast been good to me. Thou hast given me the courage, the strength, and the fortitude to become a hunter. Accept the thanks of thy son, who will always worship and adore thee.'

"Tonk-a supped on broiled venison, after which he rolled himself in his buffalo robe, and with the deer skin tightly clasped in his arms, he soon dropped into a profound and refreshing sleep.

"The next morning he returned to the river bank, which he followed in the direction of home. It was late in the afternoon that he caught sight of the Indian village in the distance, and he raised his voice and sent forth the loud piercing cry which his sister



would recognize—‘Oo-wee-oo-wee; oo-wee-oo-wee.’ In a moment there came back the clear, female treble of ‘Oo-wee-oo-wee,’ and he saw Tah-kee running with the speed of the wind to meet him.

“She saw the skin and antlers over his shoulder and her heart bounded with joy at this evidence of his success. She threw her arms around his neck and covered his face and hands with kisses, while she murmured words of praise as she escorted him in triumph back to the village.

“His mother folded him in her arms and wept tears of joy, while O-quin-taw looked proudly on his son and said, ‘Ugh! Tonk-a good hunter.’

“Tonk-a was visited by Nes-ni-ne-shu-ka-ah, the medicine man of the tribe, who bound up his swollen knee in a hot pack of leaves and herbs.

“That evening a council of the warriors and hunters of the tribe was called in the great council lodge. They seated themselves, cross-kneed, on the floor covered with skins, and after passing around the pipe, Kee-ton-ah, a subchief of the tribe, arose



and said: 'Great Chief and Brothers, Tonk-a has to-day returned with the spoils of the chase which proved him to be a hunter. Let us give him welcome and accord him the honors of a hunter.'

"Now arose another subchief, Wa-wis-ka, who said: "Tonk-a has brought honor to our tribe. He is worthy to be numbered with our great hunters. Let us admit him to our circle.'

"Every warrior flourished his tomahawk high above his head as a signal of approval.

"Kee-ton-ah left the lodge and returned in a moment leading Tonk-a, who stood erect with folded arms, in the center of the circle. Kee-ton-ah ungirded his belt of wampum and affixed it around Tonk-a's waist. Was-wis-ka took from his breast a necklace of bear claws and silently placed it around the neck of the boy. O-quin-taw, the head chief, plucked the red-eagle feather from the center of his crest and, walking solemnly to his son, he affixed it in the black hair of the boy and said, 'Tonk-a, my son, makes me proud.'

"Ever afterward Tonk-a was called 'Red Feather,' under which title he achieved dis-



tion as a mighty hunter and wise counselor, and finally he ruled the Ozaw Indians as their Big Chief."

At the conclusion of the story Happy Holmes said, "Gee, but I wish I was Tonk-a."

"It's time for bed, scouts," announced Mr. Hudson. Turning to Toots Weaver, he ordered, "Blow taps in ten minutes," and the boys turned in for the night, but not one of them dreamed of the thrilling experience which was destined to overtake them so soon.



## CHAPTER XV

### A NIGHT OF EXCITEMENT

THE troop had finished supper—and such a supper as they had—squirrel stew, baked potatoes, stewed corn and tomatoes, eggs, milk and cocoa, topped off with those famous griddle cakes, such as only Cæsar knew how to make, smothered in white syrup. Their appetites were commensurate with their activities and would put to shame the appetites of an equal number of railroad section men. The cook detail usually grumbled at the enormous quantity of food they were required to serve the troop, forgetting their own equal capacity, when their turn came.

Cæsar secretly rejoiced in this tribute to his culinary skill, but openly remarked, “Dem scouts is holler clear down to der heels.”

The meal finished, preparations were made for the camp-fire council.

“Come on, let’s get some firewood,” said Bunny Brown to Happy Holmes.

“I can’t go,” responded Happy, who was



one of the cook detail for the day. "I've got to bathe the crockery. Say, Bunny, we've got a new cook at our house and we call her Japan."

"Why do you call her Japan?" inquired Bunny.

"'Cause she's so hard on china," chuckled Happy, with a broad grin.

"Aw, cut out that comedy and get busy with your own china," retorted Bunny.

After a rousing camp-fire council, made up of the experiences of the day, songs, and stories of adventure, the troop retired to their tents. Low rumblings of thunder had been heard in the west all evening. The sky was illuminated now and then by flashes of lightning which increased in frequency and intensity as the evening progressed. After a particularly vivid flash of lightning, followed by a deafening clap of thunder, Boysey LeRoy and Dicky Byrd appeared at the door of the Scout Master's tent and Boysey questioned, "O, Chief, may we come in your tent to sleep? It's lightning awful hard in *our* tent."

"Certainly you may, boys," he responded.



"Roll up in your blankets right along side of me here. There's plenty of room."

After a short period of silence, Boysey whispered, "Say, Dicky, are you asleep?"

"No, are you?"

"No, I'm awake. I think it's safer for us to be in here with Chief when it thunders so loud, don't you?"

"'Course I do."

"Quit talking, boys, and go to sleep," came from Mr. Hudson.

"All right, we will," answered the sleep disturbers.

The lightning gradually decreased and the low rumbling of distant thunder indicated that the threatened storm might pass away. The stillness of the night settled around them, and the slow, regular breathing of Boysey and Dicky told Mr. Hudson that they were fast asleep.

Soon a resumption of the distant thunder warned them that the storm had not passed around. The lightning flashed nearer and nearer, followed by claps of thunder which indicated the storm was drawing close. A great bank of black angry clouds pushed



themselves up out of the southwest toward the zenith. In a few minutes a strong wind—the forerunner of the storm—swept over them, shaking their tents with sudden fierceness. The tent stakes, however, firmly driven into the ground, held. In another moment large drops of rain began to splatter. Their frequency increased, and suddenly a deluge of rain poured down upon them. The wind subsided gradually as the rain increased. Vivid flashes of lightning blinded their eyes, while terrific thunder crashed and beat about their heads like the cannonading of battle. The rain was now falling in torrents—faster and faster it came—until it seemed a solid mass of water overflowing a milldam. As the hours passed the volume of falling water increased and the heavens opened their floodgates in a deluge. The roar of the falling sheets of water on the taut tents required conversation to be carried on in shouts. Sleep was impossible under such conditions. Electric pocket lamps were lighted in every tent, and the boys sat huddled together, drenched by the mist and spray which forced itself through



the tent tops. A veritable cloudburst was on them, the like of which had not occurred in that locality in a generation.

Mr. Hudson, in a slicker, with an electric searchlight in his hand, was out in the torrential rain intently watching what formerly had been a dry gully, near the base of the hill on which the camp was situated. Two tents stood not far from this water. Faster still the water rose, flooding the lowlands until it crept near the foot of the hill. The stream was now a mountain torrent, bearing uprooted trees and driftwood, which rolled and tumbled in the swirling, angry current.

The Scout Master ordered the occupants of the two lower tents to take their possessions in their arms and retreat twenty feet higher up the hill to the remaining tents. The scouts scurried to obey the command, and, grabbing armfuls of their belongings, dashed through the storm to the safety of the higher tents, but before they had gone half the distance, they were as drenched as if they had jumped into the creek.

Returning for the articles left behind, they found the water already running in rivulets



through the tents they had so recently vacated, and before they could complete their mission, a stream of water a foot deep was racing over the places which, a short time before, had been their beds. Retreating a few yards up hill, they stood in the pouring rain—unable to get any wetter—and watched the raging, swirling torrent rushing by their feet, illuminated intermittently by vivid flashes of lightning.

It was a weird, terrifying scene which met their gaze, and it filled them with awe as they realized the irresistible power of the mighty volume of water sweeping everything in its path. The lightning now increased in intensity. Great forked streaks of blinding light split the sky. The thunder roared and crashed about their heads. Mr. Hudson was returning from the flooded tent with a steel spade in his hand. On his way up the hill he passed under a tall oak, when a blinding, searing flash of lightning struck the tree. It was like a huge ball of white fire shot downward from the mouth of the celestial cannon. He fell prostrate in his tracks. The rest of the troop were thrown to the



ground—stunned, dazed. How long they lay they did not know. Biff was the first one up. He staggered to his feet and said weakly, "Is anybody hurt?" He rubbed his eyes. His ears were ringing. Gradually the members of the troop regained their feet and their wits. With returning senses they began to ask each other, "Are you hurt?" "No, are you?" came the quick replies.

"Where's the Chief?" asked Biff.

No one replied, and Biff, remembering where he had seen him last, started on a run toward the flooded tent. As he came near the giant oak, a flash of lightning revealed Mr. Hudson lying on his back in the pool of water which had formed at its base. He grabbed him in his arms and drew him higher up.

"Are you hurt, Chief?" the boy asked.

There was no response from the pallid lips. His white, drawn face bore the mask of death. His head rolled limply to one side. Holding his head in his lap, Biff shouted, "Boys, come quick. Mr. Hudson's killed!"

The troop rushed to the spot where their



stricken chief lay, and willing hands lifted him tenderly.

"Take him to headquarters tent," commanded Biff.

He was quickly carried to the tent and placed on his cot.

"Now, throw the blankets on the floor. Put him on them. Quick!" Biff ordered. While the unconscious form of Mr. Hudson was being laid on the floor Biff removed his slicker and tore open his shirt at his neck.

"He's dead," whispered the boys in awe-stricken tones.

"We got to try to bring him to," announced Biff, sharply, as he placed himself on his knees astride the body. "Curly, you and Bunny work his arms. Dinky and Dutch, you two work his legs."

They began their efforts at resuscitation by drawing up his arms and legs in unison, and as they were lowered, Biff pressed with both hands the lower ribs of the patient to expel the air. This process was repeated with regular, rhythmic motions, sixteen times to the minute, in imitation of breathing, as Biff called, "Up-down-up-down."



Steadily the boys worked in their effort to restore their chief to life, while the others looked on in sorrowful silence.

"Deacon, the medicine case. Get ammonia capsules," curtly ordered Biff.

The command was obeyed with alacrity.

"Now, crush one; hold it under his nose," he continued.

The stimulant produced no appreciable effect.

The four boys continued to work his arms and legs in unison with the regular "Up-down-up-down" call of Biff, until they were on the point of exhaustion. As Biff noticed their slackening pace he directed four other scouts to relieve them. There was still no sign of life in the body. His face was shrouded with the pallor of death. Buddy Ruddy exclaimed, "He's dead," and sobbing violently rushed to his tent, where he threw himself on his cot in an uncontrollable fit of weeping. Tears trickled down many faces and half-suppressed sobs were heard from every part of the tent as they saw the heroic efforts of their comrades were producing no results.



The call of Biff's voice, "Up-down-up-down" continued with the regularity of clock-work.

"It's no use," whispered Fuzzy, swallowing hard at a lump in his throat. "He's gone."

The droning voice calling "Up-down-up-down" was still heard between the intermittent claps of thunder.

"More ammonia," interrupted Biff, with a nod of his head toward Deacon Parsons. As the stimulant was applied under the nostrils, Biff noticed a faint twitching of the eyelids. In another moment Mr. Hudson wearily opened his eyes, and his first vision was Biff's face smiling down sympathetically into his own.

"You're all right, Chief," said Biff, cheerily.

Mr. Hudson looked about him with dazed, tired eyes and inquired, faintly: "What's the matter, boys? Am I sick?"

"Yes," responded the boy, "but you're 'most well now."

The color began to creep back into the patient's face, his breathing became regular



and normal, and complete return to consciousness soon followed.

The path of the electric stroke was well defined down his left cheek, neck, and breast which were seared and burned by the electric fluid.

“Now, fellows,” said McCarty, “lift him back on his cot.”

When this had been done they dressed and bandaged his burns and covered him with many blankets, for he was complaining of cold—due to nervous reaction.

Biff went to the medicine case and returned with a vial from which he poured a tablespoonful in a glass, mixing it with water. After the Scout Master had drunk it he lay back on his pillow with heightening color in his face.

The pall of gloom had been lifted from the boys. Every face was now shining with thankfulness and rejoicing as they discussed in excited tones his marvelous return to life.

“I’m glad Biff was here when it happened,” said Deacon Parsons.

“I would have given up long ago, if it hadn’t been for Biff,” added Bunny.



"I feel happy enough to sing," shouted Curly Coover.

"Don't," admonished Biff, and added, "Everybody to bed now and lights out in five minutes."

The boys obeyed unhesitatingly—an unconscious tribute to Biff's natural qualities of leadership.

The rainfall had gradually lessened and settled into a steady downpour. The lightning had diminished in intensity and frequency, while the roar of the retreating thunder from the northeast told them the storm was passing. It was two o'clock when the damp, soggy mass of scouts closed their eyes in sleep and Biff took his place as nurse, to stand watch over his chief throughout the long, silent hours of the morning.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FOOTBALL GAME

IT was a pleasant Saturday morning in late October. Biff was anticipating the joy of the big football game scheduled for the afternoon, and the hours dragged slowly along. There was a lull in his work in the law office and he tried to read the history of England, but after two attempts, he threw the book on his desk and looked out the window. Signals and formations raced through his brain. He was eager to get into the fray. Eleven o'clock struck and then twelve. It was now nearly one, the time at which the office closed on Saturdays for a half-holiday. A client, Mr. Kennerly, came into the anteroom and was ushered into Mr. Hudson's private office, where he handed to his attorney one thousand dollars in currency as the first payment on a purchase of real estate. Mr. Hudson placed the money—fifty crisp, new bills each of twenty-dollar denomination—in a long envelope, sealed it,



and wrote across its face, "\$1,000 to be paid to City Realty Co., for account of Wm. Kennerly." He placed the package in his safe and locked the combination by a twirl of the knob on the dial. It was too late to deposit the money in his bank, as the banks closed at noon on Saturdays. The clock was striking one as Mr. Kennerly departed. Biff removed his office coat, hung it in its customary place in the closet, and, donning his street coat, left the office. In a short time the other occupants followed him. Mr. Hudson, the last to leave, turned the key in the door as he went out and placed it in his pocket.

Troop No. 20 had gained a local reputation for great prowess in football and track athletics. The troop was divided into two football teams—the Scout team and the "scrubs." Curly Coover captained the former, while Jigs Young was in command of the latter. The Scout team had met and conquered every opposing team that season, except the strong Burrows Academy team, which they battled to a tie in a bruising contest. Only one other team of their class remained and that was the famous Scout



team of Troop No. 1, the oldest troop in the city and one which had achieved an enviable reputation in football. Biff McCarty had played right tackle for the scrubs until he was familiar with the rules, signals, and formations of the game, but only once had he played on the Scout team and that was against Burrows Academy, when he was put in during the last quarter to take the place of Red Parker, who had been hammered and battered until the opponents began to tear great holes through his end of the line. So well did he acquit himself in these few minutes of play that he earned the right to play his position on the regulars. It was with a feeling of pride that he heard the Scout Master announce, at the meeting of the troop the evening before the big game with Troop No. 1, that his name was included in the regular line up. The team had been trained by Mr. Hudson, who was an old football man—a former star half back on his 'varsity team—and he instilled into his boys all his fighting spirit and knowledge of the game.

The troop met at two-thirty o'clock Satur-



day afternoon and fell in line, with the American flag and the troop colors at their head, and marched away to the City Park football field, where the game was scheduled to take place. The drummer beat a lively rat-a-tat-tat as they marched down the street, while the bugler was blowing reveille to express his exuberant emotions. Happy Holmes said, "It will wake up the people and let them know the big football game of the year is on."

Arriving at the field, they found the side lines massed with hundreds of scouts and more arriving every minute. It seemed as if all the troops in the city were present for this event. Many schoolboys and girls and scores of parents were there, ready to witness the battle. On one side the Boy Scout Band discoursed martial music for the entertainment of the crowd until play should be called. Still the rooters continued to arrive. Automobiles and carriages filled with people flanked the crowd surrounding the field. Troop No. 20's eleven was given a final word of advice by Coach Hudson and then ran on the gridiron; the remainder of the troop



took up positions on the side line, ready to act as substitutes if required. As soon as the team entered the field they were greeted by cheer after cheer from the spectators; and the players began to run through signals at one end of the field.

Their line-up was as follows:

Left End, Bunny Brown.  
Left Tackle, Scotty McGregor.  
Left Guard, Skinny Ford.  
Center, Fatty Brooks.  
Right Guard, Teddy Clark.  
Right Tackle, Biff McCarty.  
Right End, Girlie Carpenter.  
Quarter Back, Captain Curly Coover.  
Left Half Back, Toots Weaver.  
Right Half Back, Fuzzy Markham.  
Full Back, Deacon Parsons. ✓

Presently the team of Troop No. 1 made its appearance at the opposite end of the field, and they too received a hearty welcome from the throats of their many admirers. Scout Master Hinckly had been selected as referee, Scout Master Burleson as umpire, and Mr. McGrath as head linesman. Captain Coover won the toss and decided to kick off to his opponents. His men lined across the field ready to run down the kick while No. 1's



team spread themselves out in their territory ready to catch the pigskin.

A shiver went through Biff. A score of doubts and misgivings flashed through his mind. What if he should fail? What if his mistakes should cause his team to lose the game? A cold chill ran up and down his spinal column. The eleven of Troop No. 1 were big, husky fellows who had the reputation of being terrors on the gridiron. His attention was called back to the game by the clear, reassuring voice of Captain Coover, who flung out, "Now, eat 'em up, fellows." He set his teeth and nerved himself for the test, as he said under his breath, "I'll make them guys know I'm in the game."

The referee blew his whistle and Fuzzy Markham kicked off, smashing the toe of his right shoe against the ball which went soaring down the field, while their ends raced down under the ball ready to tackle the player who made the catch.

The ball was caught by the left half on their twenty-five-yard line and quickly their interference formed and began a dash up the field, which landed them on their forty-five-



yard line before the runner carrying the ball was downed. The team lined down and Captain Barclay of Troop No. 1 called off the signal for a line plunge through right tackle, Biff's position, as he was the green man on the team. If this inexperienced player could be rattled, they would make a hole through his end which would net them good gains. Like a huge wave of water the backs plunged down on No. 20's right wing, centering their assault on Biff, for a gain of ten yards. Again Captain Barclay ordered the assault repeated, this time for a gain of three yards. Encouraged in the belief that Biff was the weak point in the line which must soon give way, and thinking to outwit the enemy by doing the obvious thing, a third buck was directed against the same spot. With a mighty effort Biff bowled over the interference and with a spring like a tiger he tackled the half back, carrying the ball and downed him for a loss of two yards. The opposition was held for downs and the ball was now No. 20's on their own forty-four-yard line.

They now began a series of line plunges which met with stubborn resistance from the



enemy, who soon showed that they could play a strong defensive game. Making no progress against the heavier team at straight football, Captain Coover called the signal for Biff to take a forward pass. Carpenter stepped back of the line as Fatty Brooks, the center, snapped the ball back to Coover, who made a beautiful throw to Biff, now racing down the field. He closed his arms around it, when—horrors!—it slipped from his fingers like a peeled onion and into the arms of No. 1's left end, who raced past him with the speed of the wind, eluding the players of No. 20 before they could recover from their astonishment, bowling over an interference here and dodging another there, until he sped over the goal line and fell on the ball for a touchdown. Captain Barclay kicked goal a few seconds before the first quarter ended. Score: Troop 1—7; Troop 20—0.

Biff was horror-stricken by his mistake. His error seemed to his boyish mind to loom mountain high and to hang over his head like some hideous, black monster ready to wreak vengeance upon him. He fancied he could hear the censure of his team mates and could



see their menacing glances in his direction. He thought he could feel the breath of their contempt blowing in his face. He believed he was disgraced in the estimation of the entire troop. What would Mr. Hudson say? He could never face him again! His mortification and shame oppressed him like an awful nightmare. It could not be a reality. It must be all a hideous mistake. A voice was speaking in his ear. He looked up and heard Markham saying, with a sneer on his lips and a scowl on his face, "I told them you had a yellow streak in you; now I know it."

A rush of blood surged to Biff's face, as his anger mastered him. All the combativeness of his nature was aroused. He clenched his fist and raised his right arm, ready for a blow. With a mighty effort he regained his self-control, lowered his arm and responded tensely, with suppressed emotion, "No, Fuzzy, I'm not yellow," and turned to walk off the field. He was met by Captain Coover, who put his arm around his shoulder and said, quietly: "Don't worry, Biff; I've done the same thing myself. We'll eat 'em



up in the next quarter." Tears welled up in Biff's eyes and a great lump arose in his throat which choked him and prevented him answering his Captain. He gulped a few times, attempted to speak, but could not, then turned on his heel, walked over to Coach Hudson and stammered, "Put Red in my place."

"Don't let a little thing like that worry you," answered Mr. Hudson. "You take it too much to heart. You were overanxious—that's all. Your nervousness will disappear in the next period. I know you will make good. Cheer up, my boy, you are doing all right."

Biff mumbled a "Thank you," and hurried away; and out of the depths of his subconscious mind arose a powerful determination to retrieve his error. It formulated itself into these words as he walked along: "I will make good. I will make good. I will make good."

The second quarter of the game began with a grim determination on the part of No. 20's team to score a touchdown at all hazards. The eleven of Troop No. 1 knew that



the game was won with their present lead, if they could maintain their defense, but they were anxious to pile up their score still higher to make victory certain. After the kick off, the punt was returned to No. 20's forty-yard line. On the second down, Weaver made six yards through center, which was followed with three more by Markham. The eleven continued rushing until they were exhausted by the stubborn resistance offered by their opponents and they were held for downs. The heavier team of No. 1 now began a series of line plunges which netted them small gains. So the tide of battle ebbed and flowed, now in the territory of No. 20 and now on No. 1's end of the gridiron. It was a fast, fierce, gruelling contest, and when the whistle blew, the pigskin was on the eight-yard line of Troop No. 20 which had been slowly driven back, in spite of their desperate resistance.

The third quarter began fiercely, with No. 20's team using every ounce of their strength in an effort to score a touchdown. After some minutes of rough play, a tandem was tried through No. 1's left tackle. The play



was anticipated by the enemy and broken up without the gain of a yard. But the impact of the two lines was terrific and when the mass of piled-up players had slowly separated themselves, Biff was found at the bottom of the pile, lying on his back, with a long cut over his left eye, where a shoe cleat had ripped a gash, and his nose was bleeding profusely. He was assisted to his feet, dazed and groggy. After his face had been sponged off he still wobbled on his feet. Then Coach Hudson ordered, "Biff, go to the side line—Red Parker will take your place."

The command acted like an electric shock on the boy. He straightened up and said, "O, please, Mr. Hudson, don't take me out. I'm all right. It's nothing but a scratch. Give me one more chance—just one more."

While Mr. Hudson was dressing the cut over Biff's eye the wonderful recuperative power of youth asserted itself, the boy's strength returned, and his urgent pleading to be allowed to continue in the game induced Mr. Hudson to permit him to remain a little longer.



After time had been taken out, they lined down again. When No. 20 had lost the ball on downs, the enemy, tired of straight line plunges, which had proven unsuccessful, resorted to the forward pass. The ball was snapped to the quarterback, who made a long pass to their left end, racing at top speed. The ball was partly intercepted by Girlie Carpenter, who diverted the direction of the ball sufficiently to cause the left end to fumble it. It rolled from the tips of his fingers and struck the ground, and Biff, quick as a panther, gathered it up in one sweeping motion of his arms and sped away, upsetting their left guard and dodging the half with the quickness of a rabbit. On he dashed toward the goal line. Only the full back stood between him and victory. On he went like a locomotive, running with head down and legs working like pistons. The full back rushed to tackle him with the desperation born of despair. He flung himself viciously at Biff, who swerved to the right to avoid the impact of the tackle. He felt the vise-like fingers of the full back clutching at his hips and legs, trying to snatch victory from his



grasp. With a quick wrench of his body toward the right, Biff turned the hold of the full back until his opponent was stretched out full length behind him, clinging like a leech. Biff was still running, dragging this terrible weight behind him. On he tore, with set teeth and flashing eyes, using every ounce of his magnificent strength, and step by step the coveted goal drew nearer. The half backs, who had been racing down the field, were almost upon him, handicapped as he was by the bull-dog hold and great weight of the full back.

"I've got to make it," said Biff through clenched teeth, and calling all his reserve strength into play, he put on a final burst of speed, which sent him, dragging his opponent behind him, over the goal line, where he fell on the ball for a touchdown, just as the enemy's backs reached him.

Prolonged cheers from the spectators greeted this spectacular feat, which rang like music in the ears of the right tackle. Coover slapped him on the back and said encouragingly, "You're all right, old man."

The ball was set for the goal kick and



Captain Coover sank his toe into the pigskin. It rose, sailed high and veered to the left of the goal posts, missing goal by a foot.

"O! too bad, too bad," came a chorus of disappointed groans from the rooters. The anguish of Curly was keen and poignant at his failure to tie the score, but he set his teeth and looked as if he wanted to call himself names. Biff put his arm around his captain's shoulder and whispered, "Don't mind, Curly; we'll beat 'em yet." Soon afterward the whistle blew and the quarter ended. Score: Troop 1—7; Troop 20—6.

In the final period, Girlie Carpenter, right end, and Teddy Clark, right guard, exhausted by the gruelling contest, were replaced by Red Parker and Slim Anderson, respectively.

The early part of this quarter was devoted to continuous line plunges, with the ball being carried back and forth, but neither side was able to score. Finally the enemy sprang a surprise with a new formation. It was the "left tandem," consisting of the left half, the full back, and the right half in the order named, back of the left tackle; the right end



went over to the left end. As the ball was about to be put into play Captain Coover warned, "Biff, take care of the man with the ball in that wedge."

"Signal," called the opposing quarterback. "Sixteen-thirty-eight-nine-fourteen-seven-ten"—the ball was snapped and passed to the right half and the tandem instantly crashed forward. Their objective point was Biff, who they thought was weakened by his injuries and exhausted by his mighty efforts in the previous period. But Biff outwitted them by stepping quickly back of and around his right end and then he came down quartering on the right half who was carrying the ball, and tackled him like a bull charging a red flag. He hit the half back squarely and low, with all the power of which his muscular body was capable. The half back reeled from this fierce and unexpected tackle, the force of which jostled the pigskin from his arms. Biff intuitively clutched it as it rebounded from the ground. With one wild leap, he struck his stride and, with a clear field before him, raced down the field with his opponents trailing in pursuit—striving



with every nerve to catch the speedy runner. On he sprinted, determined to retrieve the mistake he made in the first quarter; but the opposing quarter back, with a great reputation as a sprinter, was right on his heels, striving with might and main to catch him. Biff could feel his fingers clutching at his back. He feared a tackle which he knew would prevent a touchdown. He gritted his teeth and, with a mighty effort, summoned every ounce of his strength and put forth a burst of speed like a whirlwind and tore over the line for his second touchdown of the game. All of the members of his team showered him with congratulations, except Fuzzy Markham, who withheld comment and averted his gaze when Biff's eyes met his. Bitter pangs of jealousy tore Markham's soul. He said to himself that Biff's touchdowns were flukes—that he was a much better player than Biff, and that if he had had the same opportunities he would have made three touchdowns instead of two. He secretly rejoiced in Biff's muff, which had given their opponents their only score of the game.



Captain Coover kicked a beautiful goal just before the whistle blew announcing the end of the game. Score: Troop 20—13; Troop 1—7.

The spectators cheered and cheered with great waves of sound which swelled and rose and fell and rose again. Horns were blown and flags and pennants were waved until pandemonium seemed to have broken loose. The members of Troop No. 20, on the side lines, voiced their approval with whoops and yells and hammering each other on the back in their wild, unrestrained enthusiasm. The Boy Scout band played "See the Conquering Hero Comes." The victorious eleven picked up Biff, protesting vigorously, and placed him on their shoulders and carried him off the field in triumph. He was the hero of the game, and the victory of his eleven was conceded by everyone to be due to his star playing.



## CHAPTER XVII

### BIFF IS UNDER A CLOUD

BIFF reached the office Monday morning at the usual hour. The plaudits of the crowds at the football game were still ringing in his ears. The praise of his companions pleased him still more. He had the consciousness of having made good. He felt satisfied and at peace with all the world. He removed his coat, replaced it with his office coat and took his place at his desk to begin the work of the day. He heard Mr. Hudson go to the safe and turn the combination. In a moment he heard the click of the bolts as they shot back from their sockets. Mr. Hudson turned the handle and swung open the door. Presently he heard him give a little gasp of surprise, as he exclaimed, "The money's gone!"

Miss Dodson, Mr. Clarke, and Biff rushed into his office while Mr. Hudson continued, "I placed one thousand dollars in the safe



Saturday before I left and locked the safe. Now, it's gone."

The statement of the others that they knew nothing of its disappearance did not solve the mystery. Finally Biff suggested, "Suppose I 'phone police headquarters and have them send a detective here."

"Do so," assented Mr. Hudson.

Not long afterward a central office detective appeared and was told the circumstances concerning the money and its disappearance. He made a careful examination of the safe, the door, and windows. There was not even a mark or a scratch on the safe to indicate it had been tampered with. He scrutinized the floor near the safe and the door. Turning to Mr. Hudson, he inquired, "Who has a key to the office door, besides yourself?"

"My clerk, Biff McCarty, carries the other key," replied Mr. Hudson.

"Does anyone, except yourself, know the combination to the safe?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Hudson, "Biff knows it."

"Call him in here," requested the officer. "This job was not done by an outsider."



Mr. Hudson was reluctant to call his clerk, in whom he had the greatest confidence, but finally, after repeated demands by the insistent detective, he opened the door and said, "Biff, step here a moment, please."

The boy stepped into the room and without preliminaries, the officer began, "You've got a key to the door of this office, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy.

"How long have you carried it?"

"About six months."

"And you know the combination to the safe, don't you?" questioned the officer.

"Certainly," was the ready admission.

"Were you in this office between Saturday afternoon and this morning?" blurted out the detective.

The imputation of guilt contained in the question caused a flood of red to mantle Biff's face as he responded hotly, "No, sir, I wasn't. Do you think ——"

"Keep your temper, young man. Gettin' mad won't prove your innocence," retorted his inquisitor.

"Of course I'm innocent," exclaimed the boy. "Don't you dare to ——"



"Well, if you are, you won't object to my searchin' you, will you?" broke in the detective.

"Go ahead," returned Biff instantly, holding up his arms.

The officer ran his hands in the boy's pocket and drew out a knife, some keys, and a purse. A lead pencil and fountain pen came next, followed by a handkerchief. He then dived into Biff's coat pocket and brought forth a crumpled envelope. He unfolded it to its full length and on it he read the words, "\$1,000.00 to be paid to City Realty Co., for account of Wm. Kennerly."

"Is that your handwriting?" asked the secret service man, flashing the empty envelope in Mr. Hudson's face.

The lawyer gave it a glance and sank back in his chair, with face averted, as he slowly murmured, "Yes."

"There's the thief," said the detective, pointing his finger in Biff's face.

"No, no, I didn't do it," protested the boy. "It's some terrible mistake. I'm not a thief."

"Then how did the envelope come to be in your pocket?" argued the man.



"I don't know," responded Biff. "All I know is—I am not guilty. I didn't do it. I didn't steal the money."

The detective turned to Mr. Hudson and asked, "Shall I lock him up?"

"No," replied the lawyer, quickly. "I can't believe Biff is a thief."

"Well, what did you bring me here for, then?" snarled the detective. "I've found the criminal, but if you won't prosecute him, I'll go on about my business."

"Go," said Mr. Hudson. "I will attend to the boy myself."

As the officer passed out the door, Biff sank into a chair and, covering his face with his hands, sobbed as if his heart would break. Events had moved with a quickness which left both of them dazed. Mr. Hudson sat silent, his brow lined with deep thought.

It was Biff who at last broke the agonizing silence: "Mr. Hudson, believe me—I didn't do it—my brain's in a whirl—I can't think—give me a chance—I'll prove my innocence."

Mr. Hudson arose from his chair and laid his hand sympathetically on the boy's



shoulder, as he said in quiet, earnest tones, "Biff, I know you are honest. Circumstantial evidence is against you, but I still believe in you."

The boy seized his hand and wrung it in token of his gratitude, as he swallowed hard at a great lump in his throat, but could not speak. Then, snatching up his hat, he rushed from the office, down the elevator and into the street, where he caught the first car which approached—bound he knew not whither—and rode until the end of the line was reached. He left the car and headed for the country, alternately walking and running with feverish steps, until finally he came to a woods, into which he plunged. He wanted to hide himself from every human eye. Everyone believed him to be a thief. His brain was reeling with a riot of jumbled impressions. A thousand thoughts clashed and rendered reasoning futile. As he walked still deeper into the woods, the solitude of his surroundings and the cool air blowing in his face calmed his brain and his reasoning became more rational. At last he threw himself on a log and with an effort he sought to



analyze the situation which oppressed him like a horrible dream. He recalled vaguely the incriminating events of the morning.

How did the envelope get in his pocket? This was the unanswerable question which burned in his brain and seared it like a white-hot iron. For hours he struggled with the question, but no solution appeared. The sun was slanting low over the western tree-tops when he arose and started back to the city. He re-entered the car he had left that morning and alighted when he found himself at the skyscraper in which he worked.

He entered his office. It was deserted, except for the presence of the janitress, who was sweeping and dusting.

"Well, Biff," she greeted him, "I hear you had a robbery."

"Yes," answered the boy, as he flung himself into a chair in a spirit of utter dejection.

"Have you caught the thief yet?"

Biff sat silent. He was in no mood for conversation—least of all on the subject which had crazed his brain for the last eight hours. He looked about the room in a distracted manner, not knowing what he sought.



His eye rested on a button lying on the floor near the safe. He picked it up languidly, examined it, and threw it in the wastepaper basket and resumed his seat, while the woman stood with broom and duster in hand, looking on. In another moment he searched the basket, rescued the button and studied it intently. It was a saucer-shaped coat button made of bone, brown in color with peculiar mottled green spots. He pulled out his purse and placed the button in it. He went to the safe and began to search its face for a clue, but without success. His eyes scanned the floor, near the edge of the rug which occupied the center of the room, and there he discovered the imprint of a heel—five faint shoe-nail impressions in a line and a sixth a little to the right. He quickly went to the closet and, dropping on his knees before the door, he found the imprint of the same heel in the wood.

He arose to his feet and began to question the janitress.

“Did you see anyone here Saturday afternoon?”

“Yes,” replied the woman. “A man called



about two o'clock while I was cleanin' up, and asked for Mr. Hudson."

"What did you say?"

"I told him the office closed for the day at one o'clock, but he could see him after nine o'clock Monday mornin'."

"What did he say?" questioned Biff.

"He stood a while looking about the office and finally said, 'I'll come back Monday,' and then he left."

"What kind of a looking man was he?"

"He was a short man, smooth shaven, with dark eyes and hair, had a scar on his lip, and dressed in a suit of brown clothes. I think he wore a soft brown hat."

"Anyone with him?"

"No, he was alone."

"Did you see anyone about the office after that?"

"No," she replied.

With a parting "Thank you," Biff left the office and started for home. As he walked slowly and thoughtfully along, this question arose in his mind, "What would the morrow bring forth?" He could answer the question only with a groan of despair.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### A MYSTERY IS SOLVED

BIFF reached home and took his seat at the supper table, making a bold appearance of eating, but his appetite was gone. The food choked him. He pushed back his chair and arose. Mother Berger questioned, "What's the matter, Biff—are you ill?"

"No, mother," replied the boy, "I am in trouble. I can't explain it now, but I will soon. Don't worry about me. I am going down to Clifton Street, but you need not wait up for me." He kissed her fondly and left the house.

Turning into Clifton Street, he encountered Officer Hagerty, who greeted him, "Hello! Biff. I don't see much of ye these days. Where have ye bin kapin' yerself?"

"I am living on Cottage Street now," returned the boy. "Say," he continued, "have you heard anything of Big Bill lately?"

"I see him every day," was the startling answer.



"Why, how is that? I thought you were looking for him—for blowing the safe at the lumber office," exclaimed the astonished boy.

"No," replied Hagerty. "Ye see it's like this. After Black Ben give his pals in the job away, he was taken to court, where he pleaded guilty an' was given two years in the pen. Just before he started to prison he repudiated his confession an' said Big Bill an' Three-Finger Jack were not with him. That left us without evidence, as the watchman could not identify 'em 'cause they wore masks. We tried hard to prove their ownership of the kit of burglar tools left behind, but couldn't do it. So the thing blowed over and Big Bill come back to town."

Biff drew a long breath at this unexpected turn of events. "What is he doing now?" he continued.

"Drinkin'," replied the officer, "whenever he can raise the price."

"Do you think you could find him to-night?" questioned the boy.

"Come on," said Hagerty. "We'll try."

Together they searched the saloons of the neighborhood and learned that he had left



one of them half an hour before, headed down an alley. They had not progressed far down the alley when they saw a figure sitting on the ground with his back leaning against a woodshed for support. Approaching it, they found Big Bill—dead drunk—with a half-filled flask at his side.

The officer rang up the patrol wagon, loaded Bill into it, and started for the police station, with Biff riding on the step. As Bill was dragged in, the Captain gave him a glance of recognition and remarked, "Big Bill—drunk again." He was dumped into a chair where he reclined sprawingly.

The pockets of the prisoner were searched and less than five dollars in silver was found. Biff glanced at Bill's shoes and, seized by a sudden inspiration, he picked up Bill's feet and examined his shoes closely. Drawing an old envelope from his pocket, he placed it on the bottom of the left heel and hammered it with the handle of his knife. When he removed the paper he saw, clearly defined, the imprint of five nails in a row and a sixth a little to the right. As they were about to remove him to a cell Biff shook him roughly



by the coat lapels, which caused him to straighten up in the chair in which he was sitting.

"Wake up, Bill. It's Biff," shouted the boy in his ear.

The man opened his bleary eyes for an instant, and pushing Biff's hands away from his coat, muttered, "Leave my money alone." Biff ran his hands up and down his coat until he felt something bulging. "Mr. Hagerty," he called, "rip the lining of his coat."

The officer, quick to obey, ripped open the lining with his knife and drew out a package of twenty-four crisp bills—each of twenty-dollar denomination.

"This money was stolen from Mr. Hudson's office," fairly shouted the boy in his excitement. Big Bill's head hung limply to one side, as he snored on. "This is only half of it," Biff went on. "He must have had a partner who has the rest of the money," as he thought of the short man mentioned by the janitress.

Again Biff seized Big Bill, shook him violently, and roared in his ear, "Somebody's got your money, Bill." The man half opened



his eyes, ran his hand unsteadily inside his coat until it slipped into the hole cut in the lining, and then muttered thickly, "Shorty Fox has robbed me," after which his head gradually sank on his shoulder, as he relapsed into his drunken slumber.

"Shorty Fox is his pal's name," exclaimed Biff in a tone of triumph. "Do you know him?"

"No," replied the Captain. "He is a new one on me."

"Let's go to the Bertillon bureau," suggested Biff.

Officer Hagerty was directed to accompany the boy, and together they left the station. When they reached police headquarters Biff inquired of the superintendent of the bureau, "Do you know a thief named Shorty Fox?"

The official went to a card index and brought forth a card containing this memorandum: "Charles alias 'Shorty' Fox, age 30; height 5 ft. 4 in.; weight 120 lbs., dark hair and eyes; Scars—2-inch cut on upper left lip; formerly expert for Ajax Safe Co. Now thief and safe robber—works combi-



nations—does not use explosives. Rogues' gallery number 6873."

He went to the gallery and returned with a photograph bearing the number 6873.

"Here's his picture," remarked the superintendent.

The Chief of Detectives entered the room and heard their story.

"I have two men who know Shorty by sight. I'll send them out to bring him in," he announced.

After they had departed on their mission, Biff suggested to Officer Hagerty, "Suppose we take Shorty's photograph to the janitress to see if she recognizes it."

"A good idea," was the answer.

The officer and the boy were soon on their way to the tenement in which the woman lived. Arriving at her door, they hammered until they awakened her from a sound sleep. After some minutes of delay for dressing, she opened a crack of the door with trembling hands. The sight of Biff's face reassured her and she invited them in.

Biff handed her the photograph as he asked, "Did you ever see that man before?"



"Why, yes," replied the woman. "He is the short man who called at your office Saturday afternoon. I would know him anywhere."

They thanked her warmly and returned to police headquarters. As they entered the door they saw a short man, with a scar over his left lip, dark hair and eyes, and wearing a brown suit, seated in a chair. A pair of handcuffs shackled his wrists. On either side a detective stood guard.

"Here is Shorty Fox," said the Chief to Biff as the latter entered the room.

The boy stepped close to the prisoner and surveyed his coat. The top button was missing! Biff reached for his purse and produced a button which matched the remaining saucer-shaped, brown-and-green buttons on the prisoner's coat.

"I found this button on the floor near Mr. Hudson's safe," said Biff, addressing the prisoner, "and the janitress has identified this photograph," holding it up to Shorty's view. "And Big Bill mentioned your name while drunk."

The man quailed as the web of guilt was



weaved about him. He dropped his head and whispered, "It's all up with me."

"What did you do with your half of the money?" asked Biff.

"I've got it planted," hesitatingly admitted the prisoner.

"Where?" asked Biff, continuing the examination with the skill of a lawyer.

"Will you be easy on me, if I tell you?" pleaded the man eagerly.

"Yes," replied Biff. "I'll tell the judge you gave back the money, and ask him to show you mercy."

The officers crowded close to catch his answer. He hesitated. His lips worked convulsively. Then he managed to stammer, "Under the railroad bridge—near Water Street—tin can."

In twenty minutes two officers returned with the can. The Chief of Police opened it and counted out five hundred dollars in currency—twenty-five twenty-dollar bills.

A full confession was made by Shorty, written down, and then signed by him. It cleared up a number of points not yet explained.



"Big Bill came to me," ran Shorty's confession, "and asked me to crack Mr. Hudson's safe. He knew I was an expert in opening a safe by working its combination. I went to the office and talked with the janitress to get the lay of the land. While standing inside the door, holding it open with my hand, I 'threw the catch' so that it would open from the outside without a key after being closed. I left the office and returned in an hour with Big Bill, who stood watch inside the door, while I worked the combination. In an hour I found it and the safe door swung open. We found the envelope and divided the coin—half and half—right there. Bill walked over to the closet and looking in, remarked, 'This must be Biff's coat.' He stuck the empty envelope into the coat pocket and said, 'This will fix the little rat.' I left the building by the elevator, while he went down the stairs."

The Chief remarked, "This is enough to give both of them long terms in State's prison."

Biff then left headquarters. The first rosy streaks of dawn were painting the



eastern sky as he approached his home. He let himself in with his key and went directly to Mrs. Berger's room. He awakened her softly with a kiss, as he whispered, "It's all right, mother. My troubles are over," then he entered his own room and, without undressing, threw himself full length on the bed where, in another moment, he was deep in the sleep produced by an exhausted brain and body.



## CHAPTER XIX

### AN HONOR BADGE IS WON AND LOST

BIFF won his honors as a first-class scout with a celerity which commanded the admiration of every member of the troop. He now began to prepare himself for examinations on the five subjects which would entitle him to the Life Scout badge—life-saving, first-aid, public health, personal health, and athletics—and in a few weeks these subjects were passed before the examining board.

At the next meeting the Scout Master announced, "I am proud to tell you that Scout Biff McCarty has successfully passed the exams. which make him a Life Scout, and I now take pleasure in presenting to him the Life Scout medal."

As Biff stepped forward Mr. Hudson pinned the badge on his breast, and the troop broke into prolonged cheering for their hero. Biff was a proud, happy boy as he took his seat and received the congratulations of his comrades, whose faces were wreathed in



smiles of approval. It was a happy occasion and everyone rejoiced in his good fortune.

Suddenly Fuzzy Markham arose and said, in a cold, hard tone, "Biff McCarty is not entitled to that badge. He did not pass the life-saving exam. He cheated."

The shock which his words produced stunned every one present. There were gasps of surprise and murmurs of "O, no, Fuzzy." Protests were heard from all parts of the room.

Biff's face was pale and drawn as he arose to make reply. "I did pass the life-saving test—before the swimming instructor at the pool. He certified it to the Scout Commissioner. He has it on file now. I'll phone him and prove it to you."

Mr. Hudson interrupted. "Let me call him."

When the Scout Commissioner had been reached in his office he replied, "I have no certificate that Biff McCarty passed life-saving. I have one that he passed swimming—a much easier test."

When Mr. Hudson reported these words



to the troop, Biff's face fell with a look of dismay, while a gleam of triumph shone from Fuzzy's eyes.

"I told you so," the latter exclaimed. "I went to the Commissioner's office this afternoon, when I heard the badge was to be awarded, and checked up his exams. The Commissioner told me he had not passed life-saving. He tried to get his badge by cheating."

"Order!" shouted Mr. Hudson, hammering on his desk.

With flashing eyes, Biff replied, "Scouts, I never cheated in my life. I *did* take the life-saving exam. I passed it. There is a mistake somewhere. I'll surrender my badge till I prove it."

He walked to the desk and placed his Life Scout badge in Mr. Hudson's hand with mingled feelings of shame and dismay. Fuzzy's face bore a look of victory, and he smiled with satisfaction at the turn which events had taken. But he was alone in his triumph. Not a scout shared his feeling of exultation.

The following morning Biff was waiting



at the door of the Commissioner's office when that official arrived.

As he entered, Biff asked, "Will you please look up my test on life-saving?"

Together, the man and the boy went over the records, but found no report on the missing examination.

"I'll phone Mr. Fish, the swimming instructor, who gave me the test," said Biff.

Mr. Fish telephoned this answer: "I do not remember especially that you passed the test—so many scouts have passed swimming and life-saving. If you did pass life-saving, your certificate will be on file in the Commissioner's office."

Biff hung up the receiver with a gesture of despair. He sat silent, with eyes fixed on the floor. His spirit was broken. He was dishonored! He had been proven a cheat! A hot flush of shame swept over his face. He gulped back a sob, then took his hat and slowly moved toward the door. He turned the knob. The telephone bell rang—the Commissioner was answering it. In a moment he exclaimed, "O, Biff, wait a moment. Mr. Fish is saying that he has just



found your certificate for life-saving at the bottom of a pile of papers on his desk."

"He has!" shouted the boy, rushing back into the office.

"Yes," replied the Commissioner. "He says he will mail it to-day."

"Tell him not to do it," directed Biff. "I'll go out there myself and get it," and he rushed through the hall on his way to get the precious paper which would erase the stain on his honor.

At the next meeting of the troop the Commissioner was present in company with the examiner on life-saving. The latter arose and said: "I am here to-night to make an explanation and an apology. A month ago Biff McCarty passed a perfect examination in life-saving—making the highest grade of any scout I ever examined. I mislaid the certificate, through my own carelessness, and I appear to-night to right a wrong which has been unwittingly done this boy."

Curly Coover and Bunny Brown simultaneously jumped from their seats and grabbed Biff's hands in viselike grips and wrung them till Biff squirmed. During this



scene the Life Scout medal was restored to Biff, whereupon pandemonium broke loose in the troop. Scouts jumped to their feet, hats were flung to the ceiling, and the shouts and cheers which rolled up from every throat made the windows rattle. Never in the history of the troop had there been such a scene of wild enthusiasm.

During the excitement Fuzzy took his hat and quietly slipped out the door unnoticed.



## CHAPTER XX

### BIFF LANDS IN A CEMETERY

THE sun was sinking behind the western hills, as six scouts were finishing their dinner which they had cooked in the woods. Adjutant Parsons and Quartermaster Coover were washing their hands in a spring brook and telling Patrol Leaders McCarty, Brown, McGregor, and Markham, "Hurry up, fellows; it's getting late," as they observed the four leaders loitering over their evening meal. These six officers had been appointed a committee to select a site suitable for a permanent camp to be used by the troop as occasion required. They had traveled far and wide on their tour of inspection and now found themselves miles from home. Darkness settled over the land as they began their hike homeward. They plodded down the road through the blackness of the night for an hour, every scout bantering and poking fun and jest at the other, with the sole exception of Fuzzy Markham, whose fixed habit



was to avoid conversation with Biff, although he was friendly with the others.

Soon Bunny Brown, who was walking by Biff's side, requested, "Let me have your ax, Biff; the heel of my shoe is coming loose."

"I forgot to bring it," was the reply, "but here's my hunting knife. It will do just as well."

Bunny hammered the heel tap into place and unconsciously slipped the knife in his pocket.

Presently Curly suggested, "Say, fellows, we can cut across the country here and strike the River road and save half a mile."

"All right. Lead us to it," assented the others.

They now turned to the left, over rough, broken country covered with timber. Biff stopped to replace a broken shoe lace. This finished, he hurried on, endeavoring to overtake his companions, now far in the lead. As he emerged from the woods, he entered an old cemetery which had been abandoned for more than half a century. The fence formerly surrounding it had long since disappeared. Tombstones and monuments



erected in memory of the dead had fallen into decay—cracked, weather-beaten, broken. Weeds and grass growing rank and tall gave the cemetery a wild, desolate appearance. Ruin and decay were everywhere about him. Biff hurried on through the gloom of the starless night in his endeavor to overtake his companions. The ghostly forms of leaning monuments seemed to be approaching him. A cold chill crept up his spine. He pressed forward with increasing speed. Through the darkness he could faintly distinguish the outline of Fuzzy Markham. The others were far ahead, swallowed up by the inky black of the night.

Still hurrying forward, his foot broke through a crust of earth and he fell full length on a mound, which crumbled and gave way beneath him. With a wild cry of terror, he threw out his arms in a vain effort to save himself and plunged downward into an unknown abyss.

Fuzzy Markham's attention was arrested by the cry. He stopped. In another second he heard the thud of a falling body. He retraced his steps, flashing his lamp, until he



came to a jagged hole freshly broken through the top of a tomb arched over with brick, the mortar of which had slowly disintegrated during the century since it was built. He cautiously approached the opening and peered in. Other bricks at his feet began to fall. He flashed his light downward and the sight which met his gaze froze the blood in his veins.

Far down in the tomb he saw Biff lying motionless, surrounded by coffins long since decayed to dust, with the whitened bones of their dead inmates lying about in ghastly profusion. Hideous, grinning skulls stared at him as the light was reflected upward from their eyeless sockets. He shivered with dread. With an inarticulate gasp of terror he turned and fled.

On he ran with stumbling feet until he had left the cemetery far behind. The awful sight he had witnessed gave wings to his leaden feet. The terror of the scene robbed him of every faculty, except the mad one of flight. He called to his companions; but they had gone far ahead, beyond ear shot. His lamp, lighting the way, cast fearsome



shadows which danced like ghostly figures from out the surrounding darkness. Still stricken with the panic of fear, he stumbled forward until finally he came out upon a road which he followed until he saw the lights of the city far ahead. Exhausted by running and fright, he continued his journey at a walk and finally the welcome sight of a street car, waiting at its terminus, greeted his eyes. He boarded the car which presently landed him at his home, where he went immediately to his room. Still shaking with the terror of his experience, he removed his clothing, turned out the light, and tumbled into bed.

When Biff, momentarily stunned by his fall, had recovered his senses, he heard Fuzzy's footsteps retreating rapidly in the distance. He called for help. The only answer was the echo of his own voice from the grave. Again he raised his voice in a mighty shout, "Help! Help!" but there was no reply. He reached for his electric lamp and attempted to light it, but failed. Running his fingers over it, he discovered that the bulb had been broken by his fall.



He searched his pockets for matches and discovered just one. His heart bounded with joy. He struck it with trembling fingers and held it up. As the flickering rays lighted up the sepulcher he saw that he was standing on a crumbling skeleton. He sprang backward with a cry of horror only to hear the crunching of bones under his heel. Again he sought to find a footing away from the ghostly remains. He saw a tattered piece of shroud clinging to a rib. A long arm with protruding finger bones seemed to be pointing threateningly toward him. White, hollow skulls stared at him with vacant eyes. Lipless mouths, with long yellow teeth, seemed to be asking why he had so rudely disturbed their rest.

A cold, clammy sweat covered Biff's brow. His knees trembled, and a chill ran through the marrow of his spine. His hair stood on end with the unspeakable horror of the scene. He glanced about and saw the brick walls of his prison extending ten feet above him. The last flickering ray of his match disclosed the broken roof through which he had fallen. Then all was dark! The damp,



moldy odor of the grave assailed his nostrils. He dared not move for fear of hearing the crunching of bones beneath his feet. He feverishly searched every pocket for another match, but found none. Oh, for an ax to dig his way out! He had forgotten to bring it. "I'll use my hunting knife," he said aloud. Again bitter disappointment overpowered him as he recalled Bunny's failure to return it. He was trapped. No avenue of escape was open to him. He would die of hunger and thirst before he could be found. Overcome with despair and fear, he flung himself into a corner and buried his face in his hands.

As Fuzzy lay in bed the terror of darkness seized him. He arose, switched on the light, and crawled back into bed again, where he lay trembling violently in every limb. An hour slowly passed—then another. His brain began to cool and his reason to return. His will reasserted itself. Then slowly his mind focused itself on one question, "What had become of Biff?" The ignominy of his disgraceful flight now swept over him, fol-



lowed by a flood of self-reproaches. He bitterly assailed himself for his lack of courage and for his failure to rescue his companion—even though he hated him.

With a bound, he leaped from his bed and dressed hurriedly. Taking a lantern and a rope, he stole softly out of the house and caught an owl car, on which he rode until it reached its terminus. He set off down the road, now walking, now running, eager to retrieve his act of cowardice. Several miles farther on, he found the path by which he had emerged from the cemetery and into it he plunged. It seemed an eternity before the clearing ahead told him he had reached the cemetery. It was midnight. Not even the gleam of a star relieved the blackness of the night. He started at every shadow dancing behind a tombstone, as his lantern swung by his side. But still he went forward, with trembling knees and chattering teeth. He examined every mound near his path to find the hole through which Biff had fallen.

Turning to his right, he suddenly caught sight of the jagged opening in the top of the tomb. "Biff! O, Biff!" he shouted.



There was no reply.

Again he raised his voice in louder tones, "Biff! O, Biff!"

The silence of the grave was his only answer. He crawled to the edge of the opening and flashed his light downward. The tomb was empty! Visions of a supernatural disappearance flashed before him. Had the grave swallowed up its prisoner, or had he been spirited away by the powers of darkness?



## CHAPTER XXI

### AN EFFORT MISUNDERSTOOD

FUZZY did not awake the next morning until ten o'clock. It was near daybreak when he had retired. His sleep was disturbed by hideous dreams which recalled the events which had just happened. His first thought on arising was of Biff, for his conscience still pricked him for flight in the presence of danger. He wondered what had become of him! It did not seem possible that he could escape from that deep tomb without assistance. He went to the telephone and called Mr. Hudson's office. The stenographer answered his call by saying that Biff had not been at the office that morning and they were worried about his absence. He called up the Berger residence and made inquiry of "Mother" Berger, without disclosing his identity, for he wished to avoid embarrassing questions.

Mrs. Berger answered that Biff had not reached home. "I sat up all night waiting



for him. I am nearly distracted. Do you know where he is?" she inquired, eagerly.

"No, I don't know where he is," answered Fuzzy. "Good-by," and he hung up the receiver.

This unexpected turn of affairs again threw Fuzzy into a panic. What had become of him? A score of misgivings flashed through his mind. Perhaps Biff had been killed by his fall! Perhaps he had died of fright in his horrid surroundings! Perhaps he had lain dead on the floor of the tomb, concealed by a shadow, at the very moment when Fuzzy had gone back to rescue him! His brain was a vortex of whirling emotions, but one predominated. He returned to his room, and taking the rope he had carried the previous night he wound it around his waist, buttoned his coat over it, and left his home, headed for the cemetery. It was noon when he arrived. He went far into it, and turning to the right he found the underground vault with a hole in the top where the brick arch had caved in. He peered into the hole and searched the bottom, now lighted by the rays of the midday sun.



Biff was not there!

He examined the edges of the opening and found them overgrown with grass. There was no sign of freshly broken sod; the break was at least a year old. He arose and began to search the graveyard. Two hundred feet farther on he was astounded to see a hand protruding upward from a grave—it appeared to be the hand of a corpse seeking to escape its charnel house. The finger of death was pointing toward him, beckoning him to its silent habitat in the chamber of the dead. His old nervous terror overwhelmed him, his knees gave way, and he sank limply behind a tombstone, where he lay staring with fascinated eyes at the ghastly hand clutching wildly at the air.

For hours Biff sat huddled in the corner of his prison sepulcher paralyzed with terror. At last, his fears began to subside, and, worn out in body and mind by his experience, nature finally succumbed and he dropped into a sleep which was disturbed by visions of dancing skeletons clad in flowing shrouds. He heard the chattering of teeth



in grinning skulls as they hissed their anger at his intrusion. He felt the cold, clammy hand of a corpse pressed against his face, as he awoke with a start. He saw the sunlight filtering down through the hole in the roof. Again the ghastly ceremonies of death met his gaze in all their hideous reality. His overwrought nerves communicated their shudders to every limb. He summoned his will to give his nerves support, as he surveyed the silent chamber of death. The brick walls, ten feet high, were solid and firm. The vaulted brick roof showed an irregular hole in its center about two by four feet. He searched the floor littered with skeletons and decayed coffins. His eyes rested on a silver plate—protruding from the debris of a crumbling casket—now black with age, on which was engraved the name of the deceased. Seizing it eagerly, he formulated a plan of escape. He began to use the plate as a chisel to dig a brick from the wall near the corner. It was slow, painful work and he bound his hand in his handkerchief to prevent its laceration. He toiled on, hour after hour, removing bricks on alternate sides of



the corner, to use the vacant spaces as steps to reach the roof. Finally the last brick was chiseled out and his head touched the arching top, where, holding precariously to his insecure support with one hand, he tore at the bricks at the edge of the opening with the other. Some gave way easily, while others required all his strength to dislodge. Brick by brick he opened the hole toward the corner to which he clung, and simultaneously he would thrust one hand upward and clutching the grass he would tear the sod loose and send it with a funereal thud to the bottom. It was midday when the hole was finally extended to his corner. Digging his toes into the hard-earned steps and clutching the weeds above his head with both hands, he slowly drew himself up and out of his prison and fell upon the ground exhausted.

Fuzzy continued to gaze at the hand, protruding at intervals from the grave, with eyes wide with terror. His teeth were chattering in spite of every effort to master his dread. Presently two hands came up and



grasped the weeds, and in another moment he saw Biff emerge from the grave.

Mingled emotions of joy at Biff's safety and chagrin at his own helplessness swept over him. Still hiding, he watched Biff as he lay on the grass resting from his strenuous exertions. Presently he saw him pick himself up and start in the direction of the tombstone which was his hiding place. Fuzzy crawled rapidly to the opposite side to escape detection. Biff continued his course until he was now abreast of the monument, when he heard a rustle among the weeds. He stopped, stepped around the tombstone, and saw Fuzzy hiding on the ground.

"Fuzzy! You here! What are you doing?"

Fuzzy arose to his feet, with a crimson mantle of shame sweeping his face.

"I—I—I—just—came out here—" stammered the boy.

"Yes," accused Biff, "you came out here to laugh at me. You never tried to help me."

"I—I—I—wanted to—help you," he finally stammered.

"You lie," exploded Biff. "I heard you



running away last night. Why didn't you send the fellows to help me?"

"I—I—I—tried to—they—didn't hear. I was afraid," explained Fuzzy.

"You're a coward and a liar," Biff thundered into the boy's face, and turning on his heel, started in the direction of the city.

Fuzzy buried his face in his hands and collapsed on the ground, where he lay, sobbing out his shame and mortification. The realization of his cowardice plunged him into a black gulf of despair from which he saw no way of escape. His heart was bursting with emotion, as he sobbed inarticulately, "I'm a coward! I'm a coward!"



## CHAPTER XXII

### FUZZY IS ON TRIAL

THE troop assembled at their next meeting with every member present. Biff's terrible experience had been the sole topic of conversation among the boys for days. Its recital sent chills of terror through them. In order to account for his disappearance, it was necessary for Biff to tell his story, but never once did Fuzzy Markham's connection with the affair fall from his lips. For reasons of his own he kept Fuzzy's participation a profound secret. As soon as roll call was completed, Fuzzy arose from his seat, his face pale and tense, as he said: "I have a confession to make. I heard Biff fall into the tomb. I went back—looked in—and saw him lying on the bottom, stunned by his fall. I got frightened and ran away, leaving him to his fate. It was the act of a coward. I have disgraced my uniform. I am not worthy to wear it. I want the troop to put me on trial and punish me for cowardice."



As he concluded his statement, surprise and consternation swept across every face. The startling self-accusation benumbed their senses. His words dazed the boys, whose inarticulate gasps of astonishment made discussion impossible. The shock of the revelation had left them speechless.

At last Curly Coover found his tongue and said, "I think we ought to hear the whole story, both Markham's and McCarty's, before we take any action."

Without a pause, Fuzzy was again on his feet and began his story, while scouts leaned forward in their chairs, intent on catching every syllable. Biff sat erect, his lips compressed. Cold, hard lines seamed his face with an expression of contempt. He transfixed the speaker with a stony stare.

"When I heard Biff fall," began Fuzzy, "I went back to help him. When I saw the ghastly skeletons and grinning skulls in the vault, I was stricken with fear—I am ashamed to own it—I ran away. I went home and got into bed. After a while I recovered control of myself. I got a rope and lantern and returned to the graveyard. I



found what I believed to be the vault into which Biff had fallen. It was empty. I went home again. The next morning I phoned Mr. Hudson and Mrs. Berger, but they had not seen or heard of Biff. I again went to the cemetery with a rope and found that the vault which I had visited in the night had caved in years before. I searched for a vault whose top was freshly broken. I saw a hand come up out of a grave. I thought it was the hand of a dead man pointing his finger at me. I became frightened. I could go no nearer—I tried hard—more than I can ever tell you. I am a coward.”

His voice broke with emotion and he covered his face with his hands as the tears coursed down his cheeks. Every boy was deeply moved by the frank, manly confession.

As Fuzzy's story progressed, Biff's face was a study in conflicting emotions. When he learned, for the first time, that the boy had tried to help him, his face relaxed. He realized that Fuzzy had shown courage when he returned to the cemetery alone at midnight with the intention of rescuing



him. That in itself was bravery. His stern, hard expression changed to one of pity. The consciousness that he had misjudged Fuzzy swept over him with mighty force. Instantly he was on his feet, saying, "I have a confession to make, also."

Curiosity succeeded astonishment on every face, as he continued: "I found Fuzzy in the cemetery behind a tombstone. I thought he had come to mock me. I didn't know he had tried to help me. He did his best. I confess I did wrong. I now ask his pardon, and move that the charges be dropped."

This unexpected turn of events sent a thrill through the troop. The frank confession and the magnanimous forgiveness both touched their hearts deeply. The motion was carried unanimously as Fuzzy rushed out of the club room to hide himself in the blackness of the night.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### BIFF AND FUZZY BECOME FRIENDS

SIX members of the Tiger Patrol, under the command of Biff, were out on a Saturday afternoon hike. They had spent their half holiday in the woods gathering and classifying the leaves and fruit of trees to complete the forestry collection which was kept in the club rooms of the troop.

It was now late in the afternoon of a day mellowed by rays of the declining sun, which painted the landscape with a brush of gold. They were nearing the city on their homeward trip, hiking along the highway, beautiful with great trees spreading their branches over the roadway in interlocking arches of emerald, through which dripped the liquid sunshine. On either side of the road were fences separating it from the adjoining farms and country residences.

The soft air was fragrant with the odors of the country and supercharged with life-



giving ozone which ruddied their cheeks and glinted their eyes. The birds voiced their joy of living with continuous song. The cattle in an adjoining field lazily munched their cuds as they lay at rest on the turf carpet. The drowsy breeze caressed the tree tops with gentle grace. Peace pervaded the scene like a benediction.

Suddenly, from out the shadows, far ahead, they saw a horse attached to a light carriage tearing frantically toward them, with wild leaps.

“Look! fellows,” shouted Dutch Deichmann, “here comes a runaway!”

The frightened horse was plunging wildly, with the fallen reins slapping about his heels, adding still more to his terror. On he came, in a cloud of dust, thundering down the road in his mad flight.

In the front of the carriage was a little girl of ten, holding desperately to her seat and shrilly screaming, “Whoa! Whoa!” The violent swaying of the carriage, as it careened from one side of the road to the other, made her situation extremely precarious and threatened every moment to over-



turn the vehicle and dash her to the ground in the wreckage.

The thunder of hoofs on the road grew louder and nearer, smiting their ears like the rattle of a Gatling gun. Biff took in the situation at a glance and commanded, "Stretch across the road—quick—fellows—hold your staves like this," indicating a horizontal position with his own staff.

The boys instantly obeyed and formed a human barrier across the road. The horse was now almost upon them, but slackened his pace when he neared the obstruction, as if undecided where to break through the line barring his way.

His hesitation was sufficient to allow Biff to jump alongside the animal and grasp the shaft with his left hand for support, and while running at full speed, he caught the rein of the terrified horse with his other hand and began pulling with all his strength. From the throat of every boy came a vigorous "Whoa!" in their efforts to quiet the frightened animal.

The horse, feeling the controlling hand on the bit, began to swerve to the right and



gradually slackened his speed as he crossed the roadway diagonally, close to the adjoining fence. With a mighty pull, Biff swung the animal crashing into the fence, tearing a hole in it with the fore wheel of the vehicle and bringing the horse to a sudden stop.

Biff was caught with crushing force between the shaft and the top stringer of the fence and held in this dangerous position like a tool in a vise, unable to move—or even speak. The pressure of the powerful horse was crushing his chest. He could not breathe. Black spots appeared before his eyes—his head began to swim and objects moved about him in circles. He attempted to call for help, but no sound would leave his lips.

Like one in a dream, he faintly heard Dinky's voice as he shouted "Whoa!" to the panting animal, which stood trembling in every limb with excitement. He dimly realized that Dinky and Dutch were grasping the bit and pulling the horse away from him. He felt the terrific pressure on his chest released and he dropped to the ground in a



heap, as a wave of blackness rolled before his eyes, blotting out the scene.

Swat Fogerty and Slats Kerrigan helped the little girl to alight—unhurt, but badly frightened. In excited gasps she said, "My sister, Cora, jumped. I'm afraid she is hurt. Won't you go back and get her?"

"Yes, of course, we will."

"Where's Biff?" inquired Swat.

"Why, he's fallen there," exclaimed Dutch, pointing to the prostrate boy, whom he now noticed on the ground for the first time.

"Pull the horse away, so he won't step on him," shouted Dinky, and suiting the action to the word, the horse was carefully moved over to the left, while Slats and Dutch pulled the unconscious Biff from his place of danger and laid him on the turf.

A carriage cushion was obtained and placed under the boy's head as a pillow, while Swat ran to the nearest house for water.

Dinky led the trembling horse to a tree, and after tying him securely returned and fumbled through Biff's pockets until he found the first-aid package. From it he took



a tiny vial of volatile ammonia, which he crushed between his fingers and held under the nose of the unconscious scout.

The stimulant soon brought a flutter to the closed eyelids and presently his eyes opened and he inquired faintly, "Is she all right, boys?"

"Yes, she ain't hurt," came the answer. "How are you?"

Swat now came running up with a dipper of water, from which Biff drank, and his head and face were bathed with such profusion by the excited boys that most of it went down his neck, soaking his shirt.

"Are you badly hurt, Biff?" inquired Dinky.

"No, I think not, but I've got a pain in my side here," responded Biff, indicating the spot.

Dinky pulled open his shirt and ran his hand over the injured place, which made the patient wince with pain.

"We've got to get a doctor, Biff," announced Dinky. "We'll take you home. Here, Swat, you and Dutch, help me lift him in the carriage."



After he had been deposited, as tenderly as possible, in the rear seat, with Swat as his attendant, Dinky placed the little girl in the front seat with him. Taking up the reins, he drove the horse, now pacified, slowly down the road toward the city. The remaining Tigers followed on foot.

"O, there's Cora!" shouted the girl, pointing down the road at a young woman approaching them.

As the carriage reached her, her first question was, "Are you hurt, Mary?"

"Not a bit," answered her sister. "Are you?"

"No, I escaped—through a miracle," answered the girl. "I jumped blindly, not knowing where I would alight. Fortunately, I landed in a soft spot—near the road. I have only a few bruises."

"These scouts stopped Jupiter, or I would have been killed," announced Mary with a look of gratitude toward them.

"I can never thank you enough, boys, for saving my sister's life. I know she would have been killed but for your bravery. To what troop do you belong?"



"We're the Tiger Patrol of Troop 20," answered Dinky.

"You are?" exclaimed the girl in surprise. "Why, my brother, Fuzzy, belongs to that troop."

"You are Miss Markham, then," he said. "I'm Dinky."

"I thank you a thousand times. I am doubly proud that it was your troop which did such a brave deed," returned Miss Markham.

Looking around, she caught sight of the scout on the rear seat supporting the head of a pale-faced boy on his shoulder.

"Are you hurt?" she inquired in alarm, addressing Biff.

"Not much," he answered. "I'll be all right in a few minutes"—but his drawn, white face showed the pain which he was reluctant to admit.

The cavalcade continued their homeward journey and soon reached the Markham residence, where the two girls alighted and asked that Biff be brought into their home.

Biff demurred vigorously and insisted that he be taken to his own home. The pain in



his side was increasing. It surged through his frame with mighty throbs, which the jolting of the carriage had not lessened. A great spasm of pain suddenly shot through the boy and he showed symptoms of fainting.

This turn of affairs for the worse prompted Dutch to say, "I think we'd better take him in here and let him rest, while we get Bones. He almost fainted again."

Dinky assumed command and announced: "You're right, Dutch. We've got to get the doctor—mighty quick. Grab a hold, boys."

Four boys picked up the injured scout and carried him up stairs into the Markham residence, where he was put to bed under the supervision of Mrs. Markham. She telephoned the family physician nearby, who was quick to respond.

After making an examination, he announced to Mrs. Markham that there was a fracture of two ribs on the right side, which he encased in a plaster cast and prescribed perfect rest and quiet for the patient.

When the five Tigers were informed that



Biff was resting easily, they departed silently and sorrowfully for their homes, with the statement that they would call on their leader the following day.

At the evening meal Fuzzy was informed of the exciting events of the afternoon, including Biff's heroism and the resulting accident and that Biff then lay injured in his room upstairs.

Jumping up from the table, he rushed up stairs, tiptoed into his bed room, and whispered, "Are you awake, Biff?"

"Yes," came the faint answer.

"I'm awful sorry you're hurt, Biff."

"Thank you, it's not much. I'll be all right—in a day or two."

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Fuzzy took Biff's hand in both of his and whispered: "I can never thank you enough for saving Mary's life. Biff, I've been a fool and a cad toward you. Forgive me. I want to be your friend."

Tears welled up in his eyes and he swallowed hard at a lump in his throat as he squeezed Biff's hand, unable to control his emotion or to speak further. He tried hard



to choke back the sobs which convulsed his body, but could not.

"All right, Fuzzy. Forget it, just like I have," replied Biff, weakly, returning the pressure of Fuzzy's hand. "I know you didn't mean it. We are going to be friends."

"If you can ever forget all I have done to you," replied Fuzzy, "I'll prove my friendship."

"Yes, Fuzzy, I am sure we are good friends now."

The two boys remained silent a long time, with clasped hands as a token of a new friendship which should last throughout life.

The arrival of the trained nurse was the signal for Fuzzy to leave his friend for the night.

During the ensuing fortnight the boys had many opportunities to strengthen their regard for each other. Fuzzy was constant in his ministrations to his friend—cheering him with his presence, telling him the events of the day, and reading to him from his favorite books.

In two weeks Biff had progressed so rapidly that he was removed to his home at the



urgent request of Mrs. Berger, who declared that she would not permit "her boy" to remain away one day longer than was necessary.

The broken bones knitted rapidly and perfectly and Biff quickly regained all his former strength and agility, and soon the runaway accident was only a memory—not of pain, or suffering, or even of heroism—but a memory of the birth of the friendship of Fuzzy and Biff, which grew in strength as the years rolled by.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### BIFF BECOMES AN EAGLE SCOUT

MCCARTY was not the sort of boy to rest on the honors he had already won. He was a boy of action who believed in doing things—the bigger the better. His strong will held him to his determination to qualify as an Eagle Scout. He had already passed a number of these examinations with flying colors. He had, in addition, made steady progress in the law office during the past year. The increasing business of the office necessitated another clerk, and Biff was advanced to this position, with a corresponding increase of salary. His promotion caused a vacancy in the position of office boy and, on Biff's recommendation, Emil Deichmann—known as Dutch for short—was installed as office boy with Biff as his "boss" to instruct him in the duties of the position.

A troop election for Adjutant was about to be held owing to the removal of Adjutant Deacon Parsons to another city. Deacon



was a popular boy who had attained the highest noncommissioned office in the troop and Mr. Hudson expressed his regret at the necessity of accepting his resignation. When the troop convened, Mr. Hudson stated: "We will now proceed to the election of an Adjutant. Nominations for that office are in order."

Fuzzy Markham arose and said: "Mr. Scout Master, I want to place in nomination a boy who is better qualified for the job than any other boy in this troop. He's a good scout, a fine fellow, and he deserves the honor. I nominate Biff McCarty."

A great chorus of "Biff! Biff! Biff!" arose in a volume of sound from all parts of the room, until all semblance of order and decorum was lost. Mr. Hudson hammered vigorously with his gavel for order, and finally, when quiet had been restored, he announced, "Biff McCarty has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?"

Curly Coover and Skippy Connors arose and said simultaneously, "I second Biff's nomination."

After waiting a moment to see if there



were any other nominations, Mr. Hudson said, "All who are in favor of electing Biff McCarty as Adjutant will say 'Aye.'"

A great volume of "ayes" arose from every throat, thundered up to the rafters and reverberated down on their heads again, as their vocal approval of the boy who had made good. Then, shouts of "Speech, speech," came from all the patrols.

Biff stood up, blushing a red which was redder than his hair, and said: "Mr. Scout Master and Scouts, I ain't much of a speech-maker, but I'll tell you this secret—I wanted this job as much as I ever wanted anything in my life—even if I didn't say so before—and I'm the proudest scout in the United States to-night; and I thank you for electin' me; and I'm going to make good; and I—that's all," and he took his seat amid the handclapping of his comrades, who rejoiced in the honors which he had fairly won.

Biff had rapidly passed examinations covering twenty-one subjects for merit badges—all that were required for the award of the highest honor badge—that of Eagle Scout. He added another for good measure.



It was now a little more than a year since he had taken his first merit badge—and how quickly that year had passed! His life was so filled with activity that time rolled by unnoticed.

The Scout authorities had planned a grand review of all the troops in the city, which was scheduled to be held in the City Park in two weeks. This was the big annual event in Scout circles and was largely attended. It seemed a long way off, and the days dragged wearily for the impatient boys, including Biff.

At last the great day arrived—a warm Saturday afternoon in May, bright and clear enough to meet the requirements of the most exacting scout.

Troop 20 left their club rooms at two o'clock, marching four abreast, with the American flag and the troop colors borne at the head of the column by the two color sergeants. The troop presented a splendid appearance in their natty uniforms and they marched with clocklike precision, every boy on his mettle, because parents and admiring friends would pass judgment on them.



Reaching the parade grounds in the park, the troop drew up—company front—in the place assigned them. Other troops rapidly wheeled into line and soon more than a thousand scouts were drawn up for inspection. The officer of the day passed the command to the Scout Masters and they swung their troops into marching column with the Boy Scout Band blaring forth martial music and headed toward the west side of the park where the reviewing stand was occupied by the Mayor, the President of the school board and the President of the local council of Scouts and other dignitaries of the city.

As the color sergeants approached the stand they saluted by dipping their colors. The troops were then drawn up in a great hollow square, four deep, around the stand.

Then followed the program of scout activities, which was participated in by many of the troops—signaling, first-aid demonstration, scaling walls, fire building, relay races, and building a signal tower. These were performed quickly and accurately, and



evoked rounds of applause from the great concourse of people who had gathered to witness the events.

The last number on the program was the award of the Eagle Scout badge to Biff McCarty. Troop 20 was drawn up directly in front of and facing the reviewing stand. The President of the local Scout organization, Judge Brooks, arose and said, "William McCarty of Troop 20, advance three paces."

When the boy hesitated, Happy Holmes gave him a nudge and whispered: "He means you, Biff. Don't you recognize your own name?"

Biff advanced and stood at "attention." Judge Brooks said: "The most pleasant feature on the program has been reserved for the last. It is the award of the silver eagle typifying the all-round perfect scout, to William McCarty of Troop 20, who has earned it by qualifying for twenty-two merit badges, proving that he is prepared for life in a way seldom equaled by boys of his age. I am proud of him. I am proud of the organization which produced such a well-trained boy. It is fitting that our chief ex-



ecutive say a word on this occasion and I will therefore introduce to you His Honor, Mayor Clark."

When the cheering had subsided the Mayor said in part: "This city takes great pride in this magnificent body of scouts who are being trained to become good citizens. One of your number has been conspicuous by his proficiency in scoutcraft, and to me has been accorded the honor of presenting this Eagle Scout badge to William McCarty—better known as Biff—in recognition of the fact that he is the perfectly trained scout. This is the first badge of its kind awarded in this State. I am glad that our city can claim this distinction. I congratulate you, Biff, on your great honors, fairly won."

As he descended from the stand and pinned the coveted badge on Biff's breast a mighty cheer arose from a thousand scouts, augmented by the spectators massed around them. Cheer followed cheer for the boy scout hero. The band played its liveliest air while the Tigers picked up Biff in their arms, protesting strenuously, and placed him on the reviewing stand, in response to the de-



mand of scores of scouts that he get up where they could see him.

Biff blushingly mumbled his thanks to the officials, when suddenly the shrill, clear voice of Happy Holmes was heard shouting, "Biff's the guy who put the seed in succeed. Three cheers for Biff."

They were given with renewed vigor and then the troops began to move homeward.

He was a happy Eagle Scout who took command of Troop 20 and proudly marched at their head, as they swung down the road in the direction of their clubroom, with flags flying and drums rolling out their praise for the boy who had made good.



















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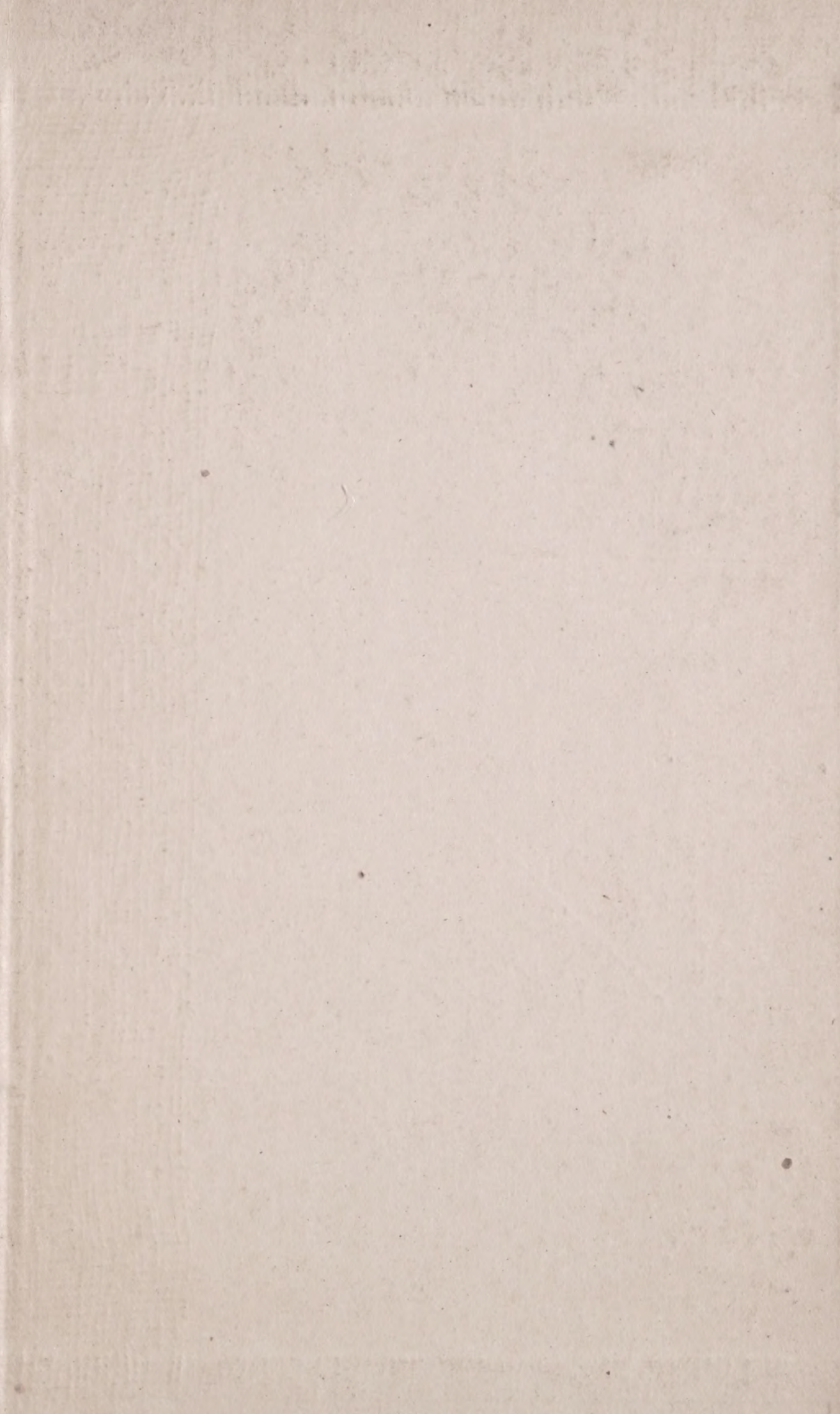














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